



2020 Hawai'i Island Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Bob Fitzgerald

Candidate Race: Hawai'i County Mayor

Candidate Website: www.bobfitzgeraldformayor.com



1. In 2018, the Hawaii County Council passed Bill 108 (now Ordinance 2018-114), which regulates un-hosted short-term vacation rentals (STVRs) in Hawaii County. What policies would you implement to further regulate or deregulate short-term vacation rentals on Hawaii Island, whether hosted or un-hosted, and what will be the economic impact(s) of those policies?

I will support the current “new” policies that were just passed by our county council, keep my eye very close to the planning department enforcement and implication of our guidelines. Through my experience with our county government we passed new laws without the agency being prepared to enforce nor the manpower to handle the extra work load. My A team (crossover departments and community members) will give this area our full attention, I do believe it should be regulated but separated between subdivision, large private homes and rural areas. I also agree that the hosted property owner would stay in a lower property tax rate than the outside owner. The economic impact needs more evaluation, number of visitors lost, difference in property tax rate, coming out of C19 a higher demand for outsiders to move here permeant, would drive up our home prices which would reflex a higher tax. This issue is very close to home I've been a license Realtor since 1982 I am very much aware of the timing of this new regulation; I have tremendous trust that my leadership will advance the red tape of county government and be a win/win for both.

2. In 2019, the Real Property Tax Office implemented policies to assess properties at their “highest and best use”. This changed the real property tax classifications for many residents, mainly those on agricultural-zoned parcels smaller than one-acre in size, increasing their real property tax bill. What are your thoughts on the County real property tax and how revenue may be increased without negative impacts for residents?

I believe the base for this tax is the gentleman farmer which has had loopholes for many years in the pass, I agree with this correction. However, I do support for our local residents being tax at a lower rate than non-resident homeowners.

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3. Hawai'i County residents generate over 200,000 tons of solid waste each year. In 2019, the County closed the Hilo landfill and is now hauling solid waste across the island to a landfill in Pu'uana'hulu. Additionally, due to significant decreases in the global market for recyclables, the County of Hawai'i is no longer accepting some of the types of materials collected at the County recycling & transfer stations. What solutions would you propose to resolve the County's solid waste dilemma?

We need to revisit WASTE to ENERGY; this is big on my list. The technology is better, we can RFP to privatized, we absolutely can't keep trucking our trash across the Island what a terrible carbon footprint that is. WE have to look at the long haul, Waikoloa landfill can last a long long time but not if we don't commit to a waste to energy solution. Our kids and grandkids deserve it. I will also privatize all our counties recyclables; in the bid process my administration will work with the recycling companies to have a bid that is fair and equitable to all sides even in tight times.

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4. Median home prices in Hawaii County continue to rise with shrinking inventory and increasing demand. Since 2011, the median sales price for a residential home in Hawaii County has increased, year to year, by as little as 0.38% (2015-2016) up to 13.46% (2012-2013) per year. What are your top three (3) actionable items to address housing affordability?

Keep affordable housing in a land bank, either holding the property title, construction note or sell as Leasehold. This will guarantee that property cannot be transferred/sold before allowable timeline and restrictions. The property remains as affordable housing as it was originally designed/designated.

The current Housing Coalition must move forward to build additional housing. We must be creative by considering more condos, apartments and town houses. This will provide more living spaces per square foot of land.

Work with local housing developments/developers with lease option to buy programs. Offering developers with creative tax breaks and incentives. Big land owners like Bishop Estate and Queen Liliuokalani Trust already have systems in place. Work with the Hawaii Home Lands to help them move forward to get developments done. This too will help to reduce local demand.

Currently one of the major issues for developers is the permitting process. This is a simple fix and can be done quickly with my leadership.

As your Mayor I will go the table with real estate leaders, developers, the current housing coalition and community leaders to expedite the building process so that homelessness and the affordable housing issues can be resolved. We as leaders in the industry must work together for a better future, a better future for our entire Island.

“One Island One Heart”

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5. The Hawai'i state legislature recently proposed legislation that would put the responsibility on the counties to research and provide data on topics such as energy, coastal zone/sea level rise, etc. as they relate to climate change, without addressing funding for any related expenses. What three (3) specific solutions would you propose to address climate change, and how would these proposals be funded?

- A) The best part about Hawaii Island is with commitment from government and private enterprise is that we CAN be self-sufficient and not rely on fossil fuels. This issue will go far past my administration but we'll set the ground work for it. Federal grants, our own Research and Development department will be a forerunner with helping the private energy sector., 1 solar, 2 energy wind farm, and 3 waste to energy plant, are all three of these programs the County of Hawaii can implement, using Federal and State grants ,private industries investors to diversify our county.
- B) Shoreline, sea level rising at coastal zones are huge for our real estate market, most shorelines properties are already experiencing the loss of land, erosion, we can work with NOAA, the insurance companies but this is a real discloser problem facing our real estate market. Hopefully the lobbying of Federal Dollars to help put a dent in this problem.
- C) As I said earlier the commitment from my administration in recycling and waste to energy plant is a priority, our commitment for funding will be with the competitiveness of private companies. My administration will work with the power companies, local communities to accept energy base waste pellets.

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6. In 2015, the state legislature adopted a renewable portfolio standard (RPS) of 100 percent by the year 2045, positioning Hawai'i to become the first U.S. state to produce all its electricity from local renewable energy sources and establishing interim targets of 30 percent by 2020, 40 percent by 2030, and 70 percent by 2040. What is your position on expanding geothermal and/or other forms of renewable energy on Hawai'i Island?

I believe this Island will be at the forefront of hitting our targets. Wind, waste to Energy, Solar, even our OTEC projects are very viable. Expanding geothermal will have to establish the new technology learn from successful other countries Iceland, New Zealand, considering there is a huge trust factor with our current Puna Geothermal plant, let's get that back before we tackle other areas of our Island. I know theirs's attempt for Geothermal on Hualalai but do we really want to risk our highest valued land on the Island? Can have gain but the pain would be brutal. Again, we want to learn from other places before we tackle the future with more Geothermal.

7. What are two (2) things you like about the Community Development Plan (CDP) in your district that are working well? What are two (2) things in your district's CDP that are not working and why? How would you suggest those issues be addressed/fixed?

I am much apricate the hard work that many people have put in to the CDP plans across this Island., I live now in Waikoloa. When I was Parks Director, I went to several meetings on the plans giving a parks perspective. I like the process, the input. The enforcement between planning, the council the CDP put the future guidelines for us all to follow. However rather than give critic in my area (which I have) as Mayor I'll work closely with council and my planning department head on the better implantation of the intent of the CDP. I will leave it at that, rather than be critical, I am running for Mayor to be the solution.

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8. The appearance of COVID-19 has brought the world economy to a halt and has exposed major faults in local government's blatant reliance on tourism for revenue. What are your plans to jump start and/or diversify the island's economy?

Let the local Island hopper come back, we sometimes forget we have 1.2 million people on Oahu who won't be taking their families to the mainland. Let's jump start this market. Our Island has a wide range of local families that love the big island experience. Secondly work with the committed absentee owner to come back to their second home, solid owners that care for this Island, we know they'll do the necessary C19 testing and quarantine (if necessary) to come "home". The timeshare owner who owns here on this Island (same reasons).

Diversify, obviously our farmers, a huge market 1.2 million people on Oahu, our Research and development team work closer with the marketing of our farm exports, and course maximize what we can produce locally too. Emphasis of diversify products that can be shipped or sold to foreign and mainland markets. We have many fresh ideas on products that can be wanted elsewhere, let my administration work with the Counties Research and Development team department to help them. Once established and successful, get out of the way and let them enjoy their success.

Medical, encourage University of Hawaii and other universities to partner with us in nursing, medical tech, clean sciences, oceanography and other future employment necessities. Were looking for education our students, restructure the unemployed workforce, to other clean solid businesses of the future. Why can't we be a medical magic Island of the future, look what Dr Earl Bracken did here. How about a new hospital and research center in the Kona -Kealakehe area and the same in Keaau? One benefit of C19, let's take advantage of our kids staying home taking classes from other great medical Universities and have the hands-on training done right here at home, on our Island!!

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9. Many municipalities across the country are exploring bond sales to raise capital for improvements to infrastructure, like road and wastewater improvements as an example; things that are sorely in need of attention on Hawaii Island. The County Council just this year advanced a \$103 million bond issue for road projects with Bill 145. What is your view on expanding municipal bond issuance to finance infrastructure while interest rates are historically low?

My goal not glorious but essential, is the waste water recyclable in Kealakehe, the county is set to be fined by the feds if this isn't done. Also, if you're not aware there is a hole with two twelve-inch lines of R3? water (barely treated sewer water going into our ocean for the last twenty, yes twenty year's this has to get address. The benefit ,the recyclable of R1 water can be used to water Kealakehe Regional Park which is high on my list to at least start in my administration, the second item again not pretty is to continue to replace the old sewer pipes in the Hilo vicinity again we cant afford a break in old pipes and ruin our number one resource our shoreline water, plus the huge federal fines that will follow.

I believe we as a county, we have to keep our bond rating high. I would never want to jeopardize our credit rating, knowing our future will always be bright. We know safe warm weather places will always be in demand. Yes roads, infrastructures if already funded, the shovel ready projects will still continue, but I don't want to make a promise I can't deliver.

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