



2020 Hawai'i Island Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Heather Kimball



Candidate Race: Hawai'i County Council – District 1

Candidate Website: www.voteforkimball.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 think Bill 108 represented a reasonable compromise to balance need for some STVRs in our community with the need for greater availability of long-term rentals for residents. At this time, I think we need to observe how this ordinance influences the overall housing market before making additional legislation.

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?

Our real property tax system is in need of a complete overhaul to make it more equitable for local residents, reduce the misuse of exemptions, reduce speculation and more accurately assess value based on actual usage. I for one, consider that I am paying much too little in property taxes and would be willing to pay more. I welcome the input of your association on this issue.

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 focus first on reducing waste, especially in the public sector. This means further limitations on single use plastics and moving to more digital information sharing. I also support point of sale fees for disposal of large-scale items. We need to implement small scale local recycling and waste to energy projects.

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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?

Demand for housing at all price points is not going to go away, so the focus needs to be increasing the inventory of housing at all price points. We need to streamline the permitting process, allow for increased density in already developed area close to infrastructure and employment and allow for tiny homes, particularly as agricultural workforce housing on publicly owned agricultural land.

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?

We need to expedite permitting for renewable energy projects, this would not require additional funding. We need to support our mass transit plan and by getting our residents to participate in the census, we may qualify for federal MTA support. We need to incentivize, solar energy, solar hot water and EV charging capability on new developments.

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?

Both geothermal and solar plus storage energy can be reliably produced at less than 10 cents a kwh. Wind, tidal and Deep Ocean Water options are being developed that could also meet this price point. We need to carefully consider the appropriate locations and distribution methods for these methods.

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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?

The Hamakua CDP was only recently approved and we have not had the opportunity to see how it works for our community. As a council member for this district, I would consider this a guiding document for decision making as it was developed by the members of our community and should be respected as the will of the people for Hamakua.

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?

There are three areas I think we need to focus on to diversify our economy, local scale agriculture, research in areas such as renewable energy and storage, agriculture, climate change adaptation, astronomy and pharmacy, and strengthen our broadband capabilities so that we can become a remote work location.

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?

I fully support bond measures to finance infrastructure projects. In these difficult economic times borrowing money and feeding the funds into our county will make it more likely that we recover from the economic downturn more quickly. We also need to be fully prepared for grant funding.

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