



2020 Hawai'i Island Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Matt Kanealii-Kleinfelder



Candidate Race: Hawai'i County Council – District 5

Candidate Website: www.punamatters.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?

The nuances of Bill 108 are still being determined by the county by the Dept. of Planning and the county council. My post COVID goal is to see the STVR industry regain economic stability as they support thousands of jobs, pay taxes and offer alternatives to large hotels. These alternatives create secondary jobs in agritourism and rural areas of Hawaii Island.

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 do not support increased taxes on the residents of Hawaii Island. We have the highest tax rates in the State for all parcel classifications. I'm worried that many of our residents may have a hard time paying their property taxes in the upcoming fiscal year. As one of the few small business owners on the council, my main concern is balancing our budget for *at least* the next two years. 30,000 people in our county are unemployed. The state is a ½ million in debt. Unless the Feds increase funding to state and local governments, our county will have no choice but to sacrifice over the next two years to balance the budget. Fortunately, our county is set to receive \$80 million in CARES funding from the State that can act as a lifeboat to many struggling sectors in our community and offset revenue shortfalls through December 2020.

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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?

Covid19 highlighted issues in our solid waste department in regards to closures in: metal, green waste and recycling programs. The county currently sends 5 semis with a 100 tons of trash from Hilo to Kona every day. We just finished capping the South Hilo Landfill. We live on a small island with finite resources. We have a waste problem. We need to start teaching accountability to our keiki and incorporate recycling/upcycling into across the county. The county needs to get the composting facility in Kea'au operational. We need to limit incoming waste and focus on sustainability across the board. In the year 2020, we cannot keep kicking the can down for our keiki.

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?

I walked my district and saw hundreds if not thousands of empty homes. We have squatting issues in these homes that lead to broken window neighborhoods.

1. Affordable housing needs to be truly affordable for those that live here.
2. I want immediate progress in our Permitting Departments ability to expedite their internal processes.
3. Local families need funding and opportunities to buy local housing inventory, creating equity on which they can build security for their ohana.

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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?

Global climate change is the biggest challenge we will face in our lifetimes. Due to our position near the equator in the Pacific Ocean, sea level rise will hit us harder than most place in the world. By 2030 we will see sea level rise. Scientists expect a minimum rise of 3-5 feet and 7-10 feet during storm surges. Our sea level communities will be affected. I know our county has begun incorporating global climate change into our long-term planning. This exemplifies the need to build sustainable food, energy and economy more so than ever. In my first term I supported all legislation tied to climate change and will do so if given the opportunity. I also asked our mass transit department to purchase electric and hydrogen buses. It's our responsibility as leaders to ensure public safety and make decision that benefit seven future generations.

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?

We live on an island with finite resources and space. Over the last ten years I installed thousands of Photovoltaic/solar systems on island and my knowledge as an electrician in the solar field gives me first-hand experience in helping our county meet State mandates of 100% renewable energy by 2045. Its 2020 and our state is heavily dependent on fossil fuel to create energy. I support all forms of renewable energy and I prefer: solar with battery storage, hydrogen and wave energy as innovative effective technologies. In my first term I worked hard to get hydrogen fuel cell buses, utilize existing hydrogen infrastructure, and purchase electric buses. We are mandated by State law to be carbon neutral by 2045. Without PGV online, our county is running at 30% renewable energy. Our keiki need us to start making decisions that benefit Hawaii and our planet. We need to lead by example; build resilient economies and clean sustainable energy infrastructure.

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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/fixd?

Community Development Plans is a great guide for progress in any community. Unfortunately, many of the ideas presented by community members in the Puna Community Development Plan have been stalled in decades of slow progress and limited funding. I am extremely disappointed in the current administration and state legislative bodies to put much needed funding into the fastest growing district in our county. Connectivity routes, flood studies, and mass transit stops are but a few sectors where progress is sorely needed.

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?

Recent events have highlighted our dependence on outside resources, minute investments in agriculture and how finite our resources are. My big idea - listen to our community and reshape our economy. Moving forward, I will work hand in hand with communities to reinforce the Strategic Tourism Plan, helping communities collaborate with the tourism industry during our post COVID reopening. I am currently working to start local food hubs, expand on innovative sustainable ideas and reinvent local resilient economy.

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'm always cautious with incurring debt on our county coffer. With that said, this bond will allow us to fund projects in key sectors in out county that are much needed at this time. We gain jobs and strengthen economy. Taking it further I want these funds to go to local companies, not out of state entities. Lets be honest - right now, we need all the funds we can get.

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