



2020 Hawai'i Island Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Mike Ruggles



Candidate Race: Hawai'i County Mayor

Candidate Website: www.mayormikeruggles.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?

We are headed towards the worst economic downturn in our lifetimes. I believe we need to deregulate all small businesses and keep the money local, so let waive any regulation that is stifling the local economy to profit the hotels. The hotels are closed right now, so lets support the small guy and local residents now when they need it the most.

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?

We need to relax the taxes on agriculture zoned parcels and make it up on second homes worth over a million dollars.

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'uuanahulu. 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?

Immediately stop trucking trash to Kona, use our sort station and start sorting, reusing and recycling. We can hire those out of work to sort and process the trash, because it is too expensive to haul, and it is not sustainable. We have been hauling from one side to the other for 45 years. The current Hilo dump is like a giant dirty diaper we are saving for our children, we have to do better. We can take all our recycled paper and use it to make our own toilet paper, so we don't have to rely on the barge or hoarding. (That last one was kind of a joke, but not really, we could do better.

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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?

- a) Reducing regulation on labor (ease handyman restrictions and protective contractor licensing schemes) and
- b) reducing building codes for small affordable housing will
- c) help turn a housing shortage into a housing boom and will lower the overall cost of the houses. Housing shortage helps the banks and the rich, housing boom helps the poor and first time owners by lowering the cost of houses. This will help home sales and the economy.

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) Give the Hawaiians their land back and make state and county agriculture land accessible to local residents to farm and hunt. The UN states the number one thing we can do is return the land to the indigenous peoples.
- b) We need to backup roads like the Keaau-Paho Road by opening up alternative existing roads like Railroad, Beach Road and the 30 million dollar Chain of Craters Road that we paid for but still don't get to use. We don't have to fund them, we just have to take back control of the resident's public access roads.
- c) Encourage students from the colleges to study and recommend sustainable solutions as part of getting their degrees so we don't have to pay for the studies.

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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?

Regarding geothermal, there are many safer alternatives to geothermal that can meet these goals without endangering everyone on the live volcano. I have heard geologist from Arizona answering a question where he stated the only reason to frack on a live volcano is if you want it to go off. Let's reexamine geothermal while we put our impetus on clean energy like solar and wind. We want to go solar, wind and biomass and we can make bio char which will help agriculture.

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 two good things are community centers for each subdivisions that are meant to serve as local economic hubs. Also the Puna CDP states policy meant to preserve our ecological and cultural heritage of Hawaii. We have a definite lack of subdivision bus routes that go through the corridors of subdivisions that is consistent with the connectivity plans with the county transit system. Also, there is a lack of continuation of plans to have the private subdivisions roads turned over to county and a lack of basic infrastructure improvements.

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?

Our plan is to establish community farms and certified kitchens with processing areas manned by specially educated county workers to assist farmers and ranchers on making it farm & ranch to table. The farmers and ranchers get more money and the residents get higher quality, safely cleaned and prepared, and the money stays local.

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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?

No, like the big dirty diaper in Hilo, we shouldn't finance now at a cost to our children later, that is not fiscally responsible. We need to make do with what we have now and save the future for the children without financial baggage.

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