



2020 Hawai'i Island Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Neil Azevedo



Candidate Race: Hawai'i County Mayor

Candidate Website: www.friendsofneilazevedo.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 need to regulate and enforce non-conforming short term vacation rental owners to follow the established rules and regulations for the ordinance. This will result in an increased income to the County of Hawai'i.

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?

Taxing properties at their highest and best use is not a good idea, they should be taxed as the current use of that property.

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?

We would like to start solid waste management resolutions by establishing recycle initiatives to lessen the impact on the environment. We plan to partner with private sectors to promote waste to energy initiatives.

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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?

We believe the top three actionable items to be:

- Allowing 'Ohana homes on Ag without the current stipulations of maximum 500sf.
- Allowing an easier process to build smaller housing
- Improving the permitting process

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?

The actions we will take involve working with qualified specialists in the field of climate change to identify the threats and work together on solutions. Being able to adapt to climate change is important for our future. We will work with the existing climate adaption plan, since it was made to make sure that we budget and plan for the impact climate change has on our way of life. This can prevent additional cost increase in the future. We can partner up those in the private and non-profit sectors to obtain funding perhaps through grants and possibly private funding.

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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?

Develop initiatives to encourage more use of renewable energy through incentive programs. These can be made possible through partnerships with private and non-profit sectors. Execute the initiatives through community education. Renewable energy is a must, but it has to be done responsibly, there is an opportunity for hydro energy, with more research to be done on cleanliness of the ocean use, and disturbance of reef, fish, and other sea life.

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/fixes?

What I like is Bay Front Trails because it's a plan that is a benefit's for families, residents, visitors, & everyone in our community. It also provides safety for the betterment of our community, residents, and visitors.

The research and development of a Community Development Plan may be costly when it is not followed through and are not executed in a timely manner. This results to plans to become outdated which results to not spending funds wisely.

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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?

Since tourism got hit hard because of COVID19, the tourism industry has taken a huge dive in revenue. Moving forward we need to promote inter-state tourism with promotions to drive locals businesses. Although tourism has it's place here, we should also look into other ideas in agriculture. Farmers are available to provide different goods for local and possible export of products. Construction is also another section to look at since we can provide jobs and some affordable homes for our families here in Hawai'i County. We can start by streamlining the building permits process so people don't have to wait to get projects started. Another item to consider would be a partnership with the private and non-profit sectors to provide ongoing workshops to business owners in marketing, exporting, online sales, and so on to help increase local sales.

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?

Bonds are a good avenue for raising capital as long as it is spent wisely. Using bonds to finance infrastructure improvements will assist in stimulating the economy because more people will be working, in turn spending which will stimulate our local economy. I would meet with the Director of Finance to see if this would be in the best interest for Hawai'i County.

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