



2020 Hawai'i Island Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Sue Lee Loy



Candidate Race: Hawai'i County Council – District 3

Candidate Website: www.voteleeloy.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?

In Council District 3 (“CD3”) Short Term Vacation Rentals (“STVR”) was a blessing and a curse. It highlighted that a majority of our Resort Zoning (“V”) in Hilo which provides the appropriate infrastructure and amenities for a thriving visitor industry, is under the jurisdiction and control of the State. In addition, STVR’s encroached into our residential community, causing stress on our housing inventory and the residential character of Hilo. This new ordinance and the rule making guidelines was a first attempt to understand the landscape and impacts of STVR’s. With this new baseline as to where and what type of impacts STVR’s have on residential communities and the need to expand resort zoning, I remain open to future legislation to strike a balance between jurisdiction and home rule to ensure we have enough accommodations for visitors and families calling Hilo home.

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?

“Highest and best use” continues to have different definitions at the County and State levels. There is a critical need to define “highest and best use” and establish a collective understanding of the definition that would drive fair taxing across all tax categories.

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'uanaulu. 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?

Diversion needs to be a primary goal. Fast tracking and construction of the composting facilities that diverts the green waste which is estimated to be at 50% of our waste stream is a significant first step to resolve the County's waste dilemma.

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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?

The most significant actionable item I am current addressing is the reorganization and modernization of our construction codes. While on the surface this code change appears to be one adjustment, the larger collective impact to create an efficient building permit process and offer a suite of housing opportunities will be reflected in the code adjustments and has the potential to expand beyond 3 actionable items to address housing affordability and availability.

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?

Currently we are evaluating setbacks and implementing safeguards to our near shore properties. As of this writing, I do not see a need for funding and would rely on robust, sound policy and legislative implementation to protect property and projects in risk areas subject to climate change.

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?

Hawaii Island has a vast portfolio of renewable energy potential including with wind, solar, and geothermal. In light of newer technologies, safeguards and efficiencies, I am open to hearing about all the renewable energy sources including geothermal redevelopment with newer technologies.

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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?

CD3 does not currently have a CDP. There are many plans in place because of the multi-jurisdictional ownership in the district that include private land ownership, State Department of Hawaii Home Land (DHHL), University of Hawaii at Hilo (UHH), State Department of Land and Natural Resources and the County General Plan. I look forward to a development of a system map that could leverage the unique multi-jurisdictional ownership complimenting the existing infrastructure that would drive a complimentary plan for CD3.

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 a number of great ideas, organizations and groups currently looking at ways to jump start and/or diversify the island's economy. I stand ready to help support any of these ideas that consider a balance of our resources.

I am currently taking a different track to stabilizing our economy and have committed a year of work related to modernizing our construction codes in a more effective and efficient way. Construction of housing and housing opportunities is a good bedrock to sustain our economy while other organizations and groups develop a new diversified 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?

As a member of the Council I would like to continue to explore more infrastructure improvements. The jobs created around these types of projects will help stabilize our economy and help our families recover.

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