

## **TIPS FOR PROVIDING EFFECTIVE ORAL AND WRITTEN PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON THE KAUAI COUNTY GENERAL PLAN**

### **Preparing for Giving Testimony**

- **Read the General Plan (GP).** The GP will contain information and facts about the subject matter, most importantly providing the reasoning behind the decisions made in the GP.
- **Explore other sources of information.** This may provide opportunities for looking at other models of practice for addressing some of the challenging issues addressed in the GP. Don't be afraid to share what you have learned in your testimony.
- **Prepare written support or testimony in advance of the hearing.** This will provide a way to clarify your thoughts. If public speaking time is limited, this is a good way to provide the Planning Dept., Planning Commission or City Council with more information than you may be able to provide within the time limits. Have copies available to leave behind as part of the public record.
- **Practice before you give testimony.** It will help you clarify any points you want to make, make you more comfortable with what you want to say, and allow you to time yourself so you will stay within the time limits.

### **Giving Testimony**

- **Arrive early and sign-up for speaking** as soon as you enter the room so that your testimony will be heard early on.
- **Face the decision makers while you are testifying.** Try to look at them directly at least a few times while giving your testimony. Remember to thank them when you're finished.
- **Identify yourself by providing your name and what community you are from.** If you are a spokesperson for a group, identify the group or organization, describe your mission, and the number of members. Explain why this issue is important to you.
- **Comment only on what is on the agenda.** Make it relevant to the purpose of the meeting – which is the General Plan, and don't bring in your own agenda.
- **Clearly state your position.** Give a clear and concise description of your position on the issue. Employ the 4-C's of communication – clear, concise, compelling, cutting to the issue.
- **Speak from your own experience.** Try not to repeat from what has already been said, but rather build on it. Your vantage point may be unique, and that is important to express. Start by saying what you agree or disagree with, then provide additional relevant information.

- **Stick to the facts.** Be as specific and accurate as you can. Clearly identify key parts of the General Plan you are referring to and how you would like to see these points supported or changed.
- **Use visual aids.** When and if it is appropriate, visual aids are an excellent communication tool for getting across a larger idea with less words. Think in terms of maps, presentation boards or posters. Be prepared to leave this behind as part of your testimony. If you want to present a powerpoint, be sure it is to the Planning Dept., Planning Commission or County Council at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.
- **Address issues, not people.** Focus only on the content of the General Plan.
- **Don't read your entire testimony.** The Planning Dept., Commissioners and/or Council members will read and consider your full testimony. Use this opportunity to highlight your most relevant points.
- **Present two or three key points.** There will be a time limit and it is important to get all of your main points across. Leave it to your written testimony to say the rest. If you are presenting for a group, you may want to divide up the key points amongst other members of your group.
- **Request Action.** State exactly what you want done as a result of your testimony.
- **Offer solutions.** Whether stating a specific or general approach to an issue, creative solutions or feasible alternatives will be better received.

### **After Providing Testimony**

- **Send your testimony in after the hearing.** Then follow-up with a call to make sure it has been received and recorded. Keep a copy of your testimony for yourself. This should hold true whether you gave oral testimony at a hearing or not.
- **What happens next?**
  1. Community Open Houses November 9-15
  2. The Planning Dept. prepares a final draft General Plan for the Planning Commission. There will be another public comment period plus the opportunity to submit testimony directly to the Planning Commission.
  3. The final draft General Plan goes to the County Council. There will be an opportunity to submit testimony directly to the County Council.

### **Please Note:**

Comments to the draft can be emailed to [plankauai@kauai.gov](mailto:plankauai@kauai.gov), shared at the upcoming meetings or mailed to: Kaua'i County Planning Department, Attn: Long Range Division; 4444 Rice Street, Suite A473, Līhu'e, HI 96766.