

The Maui News

Liquor Commission sends evaluation of director to mayor

Arakawa will need to sign off before report is available to public



Glenn Mukai

The Maui County Liquor Control Commission completed its long-awaited performance evaluation of Liquor Director Glenn Mukai on Wednesday after five months of deliberations and meetings.

Commission Chairman Bob Tanaka, Vice Chairman Darren Lopez as well as members Leon Bolosan, Nane Aluli and Roy Umeno spent about 10

minutes in executive session before completing their report.

Commissioners Dana Souza, Dawn Bicoy and Nicole DeRego were absent.

“The commission evaluated and reviewed the director’s evaluation,” Tanaka said. “A letter to the mayor will be forthcoming.”

The commission’s review will be sent early next week to Mayor Alan Arakawa’s office, said First Deputy Corporation Counsel Edward Kushi Jr. Commissioners declined to comment until Arakawa signs off on it.

“I think the evaluation speaks for how the commissioners felt,” Aluli said. “I think once the mayor signs off on it and it becomes public record, the public will ultimately see what the outcome of that evaluation was.

“I don’t want to say anything ahead of that because I want to make sure it goes through the proper channels before it goes out to the public. I think once that happens, the public will respond to it one way or another.”

The charter-mandated annual review is the commission’s first completed evaluation since at least 2014, county officials said. Officials did not know why the director position had not been reviewed over the past few years.

Mukai took over as head of the department in June 2016 following an eight-month hiring process. His selection followed the departure of Frank Silva, who retired after 22 years as director in 2015.

Discussions over Mukai’s performance first began during a Sept. 13 meeting, but the review was delayed repeatedly because of a lack of a quorum of commission members and new members. Souza has not attended a meeting since Aug. 9.

Mukai has faced heavy scrutiny from licensees and residents since becoming director. Criticism of him stems from major rule changes that included allowing 24-hour retail sales of liquor and imposing stringent requirements on nonprofit groups seeking single-event licenses to serve alcohol.

On Wednesday, Mukai said he didn’t know what sort of evaluation to expect from the commission. He has said previously that the commission

has “*always been fair*” with him, and he believes his department is running in an “*excellent*” manner, considering its staff shortages.

The department and commission have seen several workers depart recently, including Deputy Director Mark Honda and commission member Brenda Lee. Two secretary positions and that of an auditor also were vacated.

Mukai said he has hired a new secretary for himself, and he hopes to have a new liquor control auditor and secretary for the commission by Feb. 1.

Mukai did not say when he would replace Honda, but he told commissioners that he included money for a new deputy as part of the department’s next budget. Mukai added that the Maui County Council confirmed Lee’s replacement, Leslie-Ann Yokouchi of Kula, on the commission, but he did not know when she would begin.

In other matters, the commission deferred approval of the department’s special liquor license application and checklist. The forms are commonly used by nonprofits seeking single-event licenses.

Tanaka directed the department to review the checklist “*to see what we can do to eliminate some of these requirements*” and report back to the commission.

Kihei resident Madge Schaefer, who filed a lawsuit against the liquor department for its handling of the rule changes and nonprofits last year, was the lone public testifier Wednesday. She asked the department to remove certain items from the checklist, including a health clearance, full legal names and other forms. She added that nonprofits are intimidated by the sheer length of the application and checklist.

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