

The Maui News

Panel eases nonprofit license rules

Liquor department has new deputy director



Administrative assistant Georgette Tyau has been selected as the new deputy director of the Department of Liquor Control. Tyau has worked for the department for 20 years. The Maui News / CHRIS SUGIDONO photo

WAILUKU — The Liquor Control Department has a new deputy director and a new application checklist that reduces the burden on nonprofit organizations seeking special licenses for fundraising events.

Georgette Tyau will be the new deputy director of the department, replacing Mark Honda who abruptly resigned at the end of the year, said Director Glenn Mukai on Wednesday. She currently is Mukai's administrative assistant and will be holding both positions until a new administrative assistant can be hired, he said.

"She's well-qualified," Mukai said. "She's really well-versed. That's a great thing because she knows all the department auditors and the procedures. She's an expert in those fields. The transition will be smooth because she's well-versed in everything."

Tyau has been with the department for 20 years and has experience as an auditor, accountant and liquor control officer, he said.

Mukai did not have to seek approval of the commission to hire Tyau, according to county officials. The department also is not required to publish a public notice of the opening.

Calls to Tyau were not returned Wednesday.

At Wednesday's meeting at the David K. Trask Jr. Building, the commission took a big step forward in dealing with complaints lodged by nonprofit groups over changes in the requirements for single-event licenses put in place last year. Some groups complained that the new requirements prevented them from holding traditional fundraising events.

The commission agreed to remove the requirement for nonprofit members to be fingerprinted and to submit to criminal background checks; they only will have to submit an affidavit saying that they are not convicted felons.

Other onerous requirements were modified or eliminated. Nonprofit groups will now have to submit a list of workers 14 days ahead of an event, instead of six weeks, and they will no longer have to list auction items, times, floor plans and payment methods.

Applicants will no longer have to include middle names, ages and verifications of health and safety clearances, outside the purview of the liquor department, on application forms.

Kihei resident Madge Schaefer, who filed a lawsuit against the liquor department for its handling of rule changes and nonprofits last year, thanked the department for the changes to nonprofit single-event applications. Schaefer worked with Layne Silva on some of the changes and believes she helped to bring “*fresh eyes*” to the process.

“I can’t tell you how much I appreciate the time the department has spent with me to, I think, make this a better form and make it more user-friendly,” she said to the commission.

Leslie-Ann Yokouchi, who attended her first official meeting Wednesday, said the commission looks to be on “*the right track*” and is beginning to see the importance of clear communication with licensees, especially nonprofits. The Kula commissioner sits on the board of directors of the Boys & Girls Club and believes miscommunication between liquor officials and nonprofits exacerbated the problems.

“I’m really hoping with me being on the board can help remedy that situation,” she said. *“It all can’t be done overnight, but I think we’re all working toward that goal.”*

Yokouchi replaced Brenda Lee on the commission. She is owner and principal broker of Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate Advantage Realty Valley Isle.

Sitting with the licensees in the crowd Wednesday was commission nominee Jonathan Todd of Paia. He was recommended for approval by the County Council Policy, Economic Development and Agriculture Committee on Monday and is awaiting approval by the full council.

He is the principal of 808 Marketing, which provides branding and strategic planning services, and has worked with the commission as a licensee having co-founded Fleetwood’s on Front St. He is in line to replace Dana Souza, who resigned in January.

In an interview with The Maui News, Todd raised the specter of nepotism in the department as a possible problem.

“There’s a certain degree of nepotism, which is prima facie evident,” he said. “A lot of last names are similar, and daughters and fathers are in differing roles from directing and enforcing. That’s normally a separation of powers, and it isn’t here.”

Mukai’s daughter, Karilee Yoshizawa, serves as head of the administrative services division. Brothers Layne and Gene Silva work as liquor control officers and are sons of former director Frank Silva. All three officials were present at Wednesday’s meeting.

Todd expressed his concern about nepotism and the relationship between Mukai and his daughter during his appearance before the council committee.

Mukai did not respond to an email about Todd’s claims of nepotism within the department.

“It’s not wrong to hire or work with a family member, but there needs to be clear boundaries and policies within the department,” Todd said.

“I’m just saying it needs to be looked at clearly, and I think it might be better looked at from inside,” he said. “A lot of times on this island we don’t want to ask the questions. Even asking the question creates a target on you and that’s not where I’m coming from. I don’t care about the target. I care about getting the truth and supporting the community.”

He would like to see the department *“become more pro-business, take care of the visitors, make it much more readily available and on-par with other communities.”*

Another new commission nominee, Alberta De Jetley of Lanai, is expected to begin her term in April to fill the seat vacated by Vice Chairman Darren Lopez.

After Wednesday’s meeting, commissioners reconvened in executive session on a violence in the workplace complaint against Mukai. It was not clear if any action was taken by the commission Wednesday.

Bill Pacheco, head of the enforcement division, initially launched the complaint that the commission first heard last month.

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