

April 28, 2022

MEMO TO: Traci N. T. Fujita, Director of Council Services

F R O M: Geoffrey Henderson, Communications Specialist

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**SUBJECT: BRIEF REPORT ON “CONVERSATION AND COFFEE” WITH HONOLULU CIVIL BEAT** (PAF 21-002(59))

On April 8, 2022, I attended Honolulu Civil Beat’s “Conversation and Coffee” at South Maui Gardens, a nursery in Kihei. As stated on its website, “Honolulu Civil Beat is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt news organization dedicated to cultivating an informed body of citizens, all striving to make Hawaii a better place to live.” The event was an introduction for Civil Beat reporter Marina Riker, who has been assigned to cover Maui County, and an opportunity for participants to express their concerns about current issues in Maui County to Civil Beat staff. Honolulu Civil Beat

Ben Nishimoto, Vice President of Operations, summarized Civil Beat’s history. Ms. Riker then provided a brief autobiography. She grew up on Maui and graduated from Kamehameha Schools Maui before becoming a journalist in Oregon and Texas. The crowd of about 50 people was next separated into two groups—one with Ms. Riker and one with Nathan Eagle, Deputy Editor of Civil Beat.

I joined Ms. Riker’s group. The first commenter referenced the County’s potential legal case against Bank of America, as authorized by the Council’s retention of special counsel, and complained about the lack of follow up from the Corporation Counsel and lack of information from the Council. Other opinions mentioned by participants included the following:

- Over tourism is causing problems. For example, beach parking for residents is insufficient.
- Traffic and roadway construction are causing problems. The roundabout on Pi’ilani Highway and the overpass or underpass for the new high school in Kihei were cited as concerns.
- Hawaiian Electric is causing pollution at its Ma’alaea power plant.
- Multinational chemical companies are harming the land.

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- Raising the minimum wage will help with housing.
- Records requests take too long and cost too much.

I thanked Ms. Riker for her coverage of the Council and briefly spoke with residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend this event. Please let me know if you have any questions.

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cc: David Raatz, Deputy Director of Council Services