

TASK FORCE TO STUDY CONSOLIDATION OF
MAUNALOA SCHOOL

Minutes of Meeting
October 20, 2009

Task force members present

Rose Yamada, Chair
Pancho Alcon (arrived at 5:40 p.m.)
Ronald Davis (arrived at 5:35 p.m.)
Daniel Espaniola
Wendy Espaniola
Janice Espiritu
Karen Holt (arrived at 5:40 p.m.)
Lydia Trinidad
Joe Yamamoto

Task force member absent

Billy Akutagawa

Department of Education staff present

Lindsay Ball, Complex Area Superintendent
Randy Moore, Assistant Superintendent

Community members present (who signed in)

Elly Abafo, Kiley Adolpho, Denise Alameida, Dartangan Bicoy, Kabbie Bicoy, Perry Buchalter, Jocelyn Buchalter, Alyssa Cacpal, Kristina Cacpal, Ryan Cacpal, Lucy Davis, Paulette Espaniola, Lana Freeman, Kalani (Damien) Garces Sr., Laura Gomes, Pat Hiro, Raymond Hiro, Ali Kaina, Lester Keanini Jr., Deanna Keliroomalu, Donalyn Keli`ipule`ole, Kealoha Laemoa, Mahiki Lankford, Tracy Lindsay, Liko Mawae, Veronica Nuuanu, Kim Pagan, John Pele, Hollycleo K. Reyes-Garces, Jim and Sue Schelinski, Bob Underwood, Vicki Underwood

Call to order

Ms. Yamada called the meeting to order at 5:14 p.m.

Introduction of task force members

Ms. Yamada introduced the members present.

Purpose of task force

Mr. Moore said the purpose of the task force is to conduct a study of the possible consolidation of Maunaloa School with either Kualapuu School or Kaunakakai School, and to make a recommendation to the complex area superintendent, Mr. Ball.

Ms. Yamada explained that Messrs. Ball and Moore would be resource persons for the task force, gathering information the task force would need to complete its study and report.

Review of Chapter 8-38, Hawaii Administrative Rules

Mr. Moore reviewed a presentation on Chapter 8-38, Hawaii Administrative Rules, "Consolidation of Public Schools." Ms. Yamada distributed a diagrammatic representation of the school consolidation task force process. Chapter 38 includes seven areas that the task force report must address; the task force has the authority to include any other matters.

Review of Hawaii's "Sunshine Law"

Mr. Moore reviewed a presentation on the Hawaii Sunshine Law. The task force is subject to operating in accordance with the Sunshine Law.

Adoption of Rules of Procedure

The task force agreed to limit oral testimony to two minutes. The Rules of Procedure will be posted on the task force website, accessible from the Department of Education homepage.

Discussion/Action on the Report of the Task Force

If Maunaloa School were closed, would parents have a choice on whether their children would go to Kualapuu or Kaunakakai? This question has not been addressed by the Department of Education, because it has not been asked before. The task force will address this.

Does the task force have the authority to change the attendance area of Kualapuu School? No, but it has the authority to make a recommendation on attendance area boundaries.

Ms. Yamada distributed to the task force members and discussed an outline of the issues the task force will need to address and the information it will need to address them. She asked task force members to think of other information that should be considered.

Public Testimony

- Sue Shelinski, retired teacher who went back to work at Maunaloa because she loves teaching. Of all the schools she has taught at, she would send her child to Maunaloa because of its environment. Would you send your child from a hillside community to a tsunami zone? Would you want to have to go to Kaunakakai to pick up your child in an emergency? Children may have to spend the night in Kaunakakai if a fire closes the road. The long bus ride and hot environment in Kaunakakai would adversely affect learning. The Maunaloa facility would deteriorate if it were closed. Busing students is costly and unsafe for students. Kaunakakai and Kualapuu are already at capacity. Crowding compounds learning difficulties. Schools want to increase attendance because they get more money. We should put students first. Consolidation would reduce the number of jobs. The Molokai economy is already stressed. Many families would be affected. Maunaloa School has a unique relationship between teachers, students, and parents. Aunty Elly knows families of the community well and intervenes frequently to solve problems that otherwise would fall through the cracks. Maunaloa has two part-time teachers which cuts costs but also allows students with special needs to be pulled out of class to receive individual attention. What programs could be added to Maunaloa to make it more financially viable? Preschool? Special programs? Teacher supply store? Home school consultation? Recycling center? Collection point for materials that could be used in the classroom?
- Lana Freeman, teacher at Maunaloa. Read testimonies from two alumni. Christina Capcal said consolidation would have a negative impact on the children. At Maunaloa they receive one-to-one help. Elsewhere they would fall behind because of the ½-hour 17-mile bus ride and less individual attention. There are students who have transferred to Maunaloa School because of the individual help they get at Maunaloa. If parents have to drive their children to Kaunakakai, it will be expensive for parents. Chantelle Cacpal had similar comments.
- Bob Underwood, Maunaloa resident. Cost to keep the school open is small compared to the hardship on people. Closing the school sends a message that Maunaloa has no future. Instead of closing, reduce costs by having teachers act as administrators, have parents provide meals, rent cottages for income.
- Dartangan Bicoy, grandparent of Maunaloa students, SCC member at Molokai H.S. It's not about money. Closing the school would kill the community. Twenty families would move. Stores would have to close. Maunaloa is the only school meeting AYP. Class size directly impacts student achievement.
- Perry Buchalter, Molokai High School teacher. It may be legal to close the school, but it doesn't make it right. Maunaloa is too far away from other places. Small children should not have to stand in the rain waiting for the bus. You can't just look at dollars. What's best for the children?
- Mahiki Lankford, Maunaloa School cafeteria manager. Look at the attendance and tardy records for Maunaloa. If a child got sick at Kaunakakai School, parents would not be able to afford to go pick them up. The community would die if there were no school. Children come to school early, hungry. If they went to Kaunakakai, what time would they have to get up to get to school in time to eat breakfast?

- Elly Abafo, works at the school. This school has had generations of students. The school is about our children's future. School is their second home. Children are playing here after hours. They feel secure.
- John Pele, 27-year Maunaloa resident, father of an alumna. For years they've been talking about closing Maunaloa School. Everyone on the task force has a vested interest in Maunaloa School. Task force should look at how to find ways to keep the school open, not to find reasons to close it.
- Tai Yamamoto, 6th grade student. Small classes are beneficial to students. Closing the school will mean longer travel time and less time for homework. Closing the school will make the community smaller because those who work at the school will need to find a job elsewhere. Families might move to be nearer school. My dad will lose his job if the school is closed.
- Reichel Morris, student. Closing the school will put teachers and the principal out of a job. They won't have money to pay their bills. The stores, other businesses, and post office might have to shut down.
- Moses-Don Espaniola, 6th grade student. If the school is closed, people will move and more houses will be vacant. The Ranch might close the housing where my family lives. People working at the school will lose their jobs. Parents will have to drive their children to another school, paying for gas, or the DOE will need to have more buses.
- Pookela Moses Espanto, 3rd grade student who has attended Maunaloa School for two years. We have a fantastic principal. He helps students and teachers.

Dates, times, and locations of future task force meetings

The next meetings will be tentatively on:

Tuesday, November 24, 2009 at 5 p.m. at Maunaloa School.

Tuesday, January 26, 2010 at 5 p.m. at Maunaloa School.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010 at 5 p.m. at Maunaloa School.

Members will confirm their availability with Ms. Yamada via email at rmcm@aloha.net

The task force plans to take field trips to look at Kualapuu and Kaunakakai Schools.

These will public meetings and notices of them will be duly posted.

Adjournment

Ms. Yamada asked for written feedback to the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Randy Moore