

TASK FORCE TO STUDY CONSOLIDATION OF  
MAUNALOA SCHOOL

Minutes of Meeting  
March 23, 2010

Task force members present

Rose Yamada, Chair  
Daniel Espaniola  
Wendy Espaniola  
Janice Espiritu  
Lydia Trinidad  
Joe Yamamoto

Task force members absent

Billy Akutagawa  
Pancho Alcon  
Ronald Davis  
Karen Holt

Community members present (who signed in)

Elly Abafo, Denise Alameida, Rochelle Borden, Lana Freeman, Luana Kamai, Shayna Kamai, Sam Namakaeha, Veronica Nuuanu, Bob Underwood

Call to order

Ms. Yamada called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

Review of agenda

Ms. Yamada reviewed the agenda for the meeting and identified the two primary purposes for the evening. The Task Force deliberations were to focus on:

1. Improving the Maunaloa Consolidation Study Report, February Draft, for transmittal to the Complex Area Superintendent, guided by three questions.
  - a. *Does the draft reflect the TF conclusions?*
  - b. *Are the important, salient findings of the study included?*
  - c. *Is the presentation accurate and comprehensive?*
2. Agreeing on the remaining timeline, with particular attention to dates for the public hearing and the final Task Force Meeting.
  - a. Allowing 30 days for announcement of the public hearing
  - b. Providing time for final revision of report between public hearing and last meeting

## Minutes of the meeting of February 16, 2010

Upon motion duly made, seconded, and unanimously carried, the minutes of the meeting of February 16, 2010, were approved as circulated.

### Communication

Chair cited the article in the Molokai Dispatch, February 17, 2010, “Representative Mele Carroll Protects Small Schools,” in which the Representative makes note of her efforts:

- HB 2671, exempting smaller schools in District 13 from the merging of smaller schools with larger ones;
- HB 2974, prohibiting closure of Maunaloa Elementary School;
- Emphasis on the state’s obligation to provide each child with a quality education.

Ms. Yamada shared guidance from Mr. Moore regarding procedures for the Public Hearing. She also requested that individuals planning to testify prepare their testimonies in writing for the record.

### Deliberations and discussion on the February Draft

#### Introduction

Highlighted were the seriousness of the responsibility and the Task Force concern for the children. The three questions guiding deliberation were:

- *What will the impact be on the children today and in the future?*
- *What will the demographic impact be with the closing of the school – to this community and to the entire island?*
- *Are there immediate effects, and what effects will manifest over time?*

Comment made on errors in mileage estimates.

#### 1. The advantages and disadvantages of consolidation in respect to efficient school administration and providing equal educational opportunities.

- Consistency in the mileage estimates will need to be fixed.
- Ms. Trinidad stated the information was good. However, she got the impression that size doesn’t matter. That is, Kaunakakai and Kualapuu did well. So also did Maunaloa. The caution is that small is not necessarily good for all students. When and for what students does size matter? That point is important. The other point on the “ideal administrative practice” identified at Maunaloa appears to imply that the practice doesn’t occur at larger schools.

#### 2. The adequacy of facilities, equipment, programs, transportation service, and other support services at the school which may be closed and the school to which students may be transferred.

- Ms. Espiritu stated that, although 9 classrooms are identified as being needed should consolidation occur, her current enrollment will enable her to shift assignments around and accommodate the children without additional rooms. However, class sizes will be larger than the children are accustomed to at Maunaloa.
- Ms. Trinidad noted that the projection of classroom needs was based on the research ratios of 13 – 17. With consolidation and raised ratios of 22 and up, the children could be accommodated although three additional classrooms would enable continuing the special services and programs currently operating at Kualapuu. It was further noted that Kualapuu has the Hawaiian Language Immersion Program, which requires separate scheduling of classes (i.e., HLIP class and English class) and, therefore, more classrooms.
- Ms. Espiritu commented on the discussion of programs. In a smaller school like Maunaloa, all the children can participate in the programs. Schools such as Kaunakakai have greater variety of offerings, although not all children participate in all the offerings.
- The concern expressed by the community regarding the longer school day resulting from the need to commute, and the additional concern that participation by the children in afterschool activities would further lengthen the day for the children are referenced in the report. Ms. Trinidad stated that should consolidation occur, arrangements would be made to ensure that all kids would have equal opportunity to participate. Included in the arrangements would be scheduling of buses so as to minimize the travel time. As a charter school, Kualapuu has paid for special buses to accommodate children's participation. She also added that Kualapuu is currently looking at lengthening the school day.
- There was some disagreement about the miles between schools and the length of travel time. Estimates were 15 miles from Maunaloa to Kualapuu and 18 miles to Kaunakakai. But there was agreement that driving on Molokai is very different from driving on Oahu. This difference must be communicated to the Board.
- Mr. Namakaeha of the community noted that \$400 per bus per day is high. He thought that there could be cheaper ways a school could arrange for transporting students. Ms. Trinidad stated that Kualapuu is looking at getting its own bus, but the problem is there are families on Molokai that rely on the bus contracts issued by the State. It is not a money issue. It has impact on the community. Liability insurance for private bus companies is high, so the State contracts actually help the community by absorbing the liability.
- Maunaloa's support services are primarily itinerant. The staff at the school wear many hats – counselor, parent coordinator, test coordinator, etc. They were commended for the good job they were doing with the children.

### 3. Social impact on the children, schools, community and those involved in the consolidation.

- Mr. Espaniola emphasized his concern for the children and the social impact that consolidation would have on them. It would be very difficult for them to make the transition, especially at their young ages. They may not be ready to make that adjustment. To pull the children away from their home-area, their comfort zone, may be traumatic. We see similar effects on our young people who leave Molokai for college or a large city – they end up coming home or going to UH. With the young children in elementary grades who are not prepared to navigate the larger, strange environments, we may be setting them up to fail. It is important to see how these kids will make the transition. The receiving school has to watch the dynamics carefully. All those little things we sometimes gloss over are more important than the “big” things we talk about like facilities. The little kids from kindergarten are moving from a seven classroom setting to a 20-classroom setting – some kids may flourish, but some children may be seriously harmed. It is a double-edged sword.
- Ms. Trinidad noted that despite the small school providing the comfort, security and social acceptance, Kualapuu has a higher attendance rate and fewer suspensions than Maunaloa. Sometimes a new environment provides “a second chance” for individuals. Change is not bad. Mr. Espaniola agreed, but reiterated his analogy with the double-edged sword.
- Mr. Underwood from the community suggested that a study should be conducted to see what happens to children under consolidation.
- The issue of “bumping” was discussed but not included in the report. Molokai is different from Oahu, where a tenured teacher from Honolulu District may have opportunity to teach in Central District or Windward. On the other hand, Ms. Trinidad said the concern being placed on the schools is to have a faculty of “highly qualified teachers.” Mr. Underwood asked if the “bumping” process excluded Kualapuu since it is a charter school and has its own contract with HSTA. He noted that there would, as a result, be a disproportionate effect on Kilohana and Kaunakakai.
- Ms. Yamada made a special point about the need for additional care and procedures to receive children being bused and to prepare them to leave by bus. This will require time in the classrooms and personnel at the school. However, no costs were included.
- Ms. Trinidad commented on social impact relative to the school being tied to the community – the school size is tied to the community. The struggle that Maunaloa may have in the long run will be the continual fight with this battle, unless the community grows. She thinks that as cuts are coming down next

year, a cut will be felt more at Maunaloa than at the larger schools. That may result in teachers assuming more “jobs” or responsibilities. It is going to be rough and it is important for the school community to think about. Both Ms. Trinidad and Ms. Espiritu agreed that they are competitive when it comes to students (enrollment). Ms. Trinidad noted that there is a larger world out there, and the “central” schools would welcome Maunaloa children.

- Ms. Espiritu explained her position relative to her school and enrollment. While she would welcome Maunaloa children and could accommodate them, she stated that she believes in CHOICE. Parents should have the choice in determining the best education for their children, and therefore the most appropriate school. The budget will affect all of us, but retaining choice for the children and parents is critical.
- Ms. Espaniola agreed that Maunaloa School is tied to the community. It is the heart of the community. Whatever happens, we have really good schools on Molokai. She said, “For me, I’m a community member here, I’m a teacher at this school. I feel that if our school closes it will seriously impact our children and our community. It will affect my husband’s business. It will affect me personally. Part of his business is with Prudential and the vacant lots of Nani Maunaloa. Right now the rentals are at 43% and the manager says that it can’t drop below 40%. The ranch is not saying anything. I wanted to share the information because if the school closes and the rentals drop it’ll affect everyone here. The impact will be major. Yes, the impact will be larger... we don’t want a domino effect. We need to stop it here.”
- Ms. Trinidad suggested adding/quoting testimony in the text of this section. She asked Daniel and Wendy to identify testimony, which may be added to the text.
- Mr. Namakaeha from the community supported and reiterated the concern for the school and the community. He pointed to the impact on an already threatened community. He moved to Maunaloa and is planning to start a restaurant. He noted how important the school is and he is willing to work to keep the school open.

4. The net financial savings that may be realized from consolidation, including projections of additional expenditures at the receiving school(s).

- Ms. Yamada explained the various methods for calculating savings: 1) theoretical average salaries of non-instructional staff; 2) actual, total salaries of Maunaloa staff via SF-5; and 3) per pupil allocation differences. She then explained the inclusion of additional costs estimated under consolidation. Two results were found: 1) Net savings of \$104,950, and 2) Net loss (additional spending) of \$151,653.

- Ms. Trinidad asked if retaining of tenured staff would result in savings from teachers or staff that are “bumped.” It would appear to be a wash, since the receiving school will need to increase its overall staffing with the addition of 60+ children.
- Mr. Namakaeha asked if food service could be a savings area. Ms. Trinidad explained the federal regulations governing food service – portioning, nutrition, etc. For private vendors, it would be difficult to meet the regulations and expect profit, since reimbursement is limited.

5. Potential new residential developments, projected changes in enrollment, and other relevant demographic considerations.

- Mr. Yamamoto validated the enrollment plateau reflected in the table and the report.
- Ms. Espaniola noted that the low income housing is supported by both the State and Federal governments.

6. Suitability for using portions of the school facilities to accommodate space requirements of other department or state activities.

- Suggestions made to add to or enhance services provided at Maunaloa School were made at other meetings. Ms. Yamada presented follow-up information for each suggestion. She emphasized that if the program or activity suggested was needed and supported, then someone from the school/community must step up to provide the leadership in pursuing the planning and implementation.
- Ms. Trinidad pointed out that these activities are doable, but require long-ranged commitment. Many of them may take as long as four years. Someone or a group needs to make that commitment.
- Mr. Espaniola saw possibilities in the courses (MCC) or activities for adults. These services will require coordination with the respective institution. He noted how many adults may be interested, but unable to travel to Kaunakakai two or three nights a week. Making the service available at Maunaloa may be more attractive to them.
- One of the alternatives presented was conversion charter school. Ms. Trinidad, being principal of a conversion charter school, gave insights and examples of efforts. Conversion takes a lot of effort and time. She cited the Laupahoehoe effort, which was started and developed by the community. She also tossed out the idea, possibly as an interim, of how Kualapuu can have a satellite campus (i.e., Maunaloa).

- Ms. Yamada referred to a last minute addendum that was sent out to Task Force members relating to the title/deed for Maunaloa School. The materials researched by Mr. Moore's staff will become Appendix F of the report. These materials indicate the deeding of part of the property in 1935 by the pineapple company explicitly for a school. There remains some confusion, although the property appears to be registered to Molokai Properties. In either case, the return of the property to the owner is undoubtedly spelled out to cover the situation where the school is closed or abandoned. The question is: What happens to the buildings should the school be closed? If the buildings are to be moved or demolished, this would incur additional costs to the State. An estimate of \$15 per square foot was found on the Internet. For the existing building, this would be a cost of over \$150,000.

### Public Testimony

None

### Date, time, location, and work of next task force meeting

The agreed upon timeline and purposes include:

1. Public Hearing, May 10, 2010
  - a. Purpose will be to provide community with opportunity to make input to the Task Force Study Draft.
  - b. Process will have chair facilitating the presentation of testimonies, both oral and written. No dialog between TF members and testifiers, nor among TF members recommended.
2. Final Task Force Meeting, May 18, 2010
  - a. Purpose will be to agree on recommendations and finalization of Study Report for formal transmittal to Complex Area Superintendent.
  - b. Process will be to review community input from Public Hearing, Task Force members' individual recommendations, and consensus (or voting) on final recommendations to complete report.

### Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Rose Yamada