

TASK FORCE TO STUDY CONSOLIDATION OF
MAUNALOA SCHOOL

Minutes of Meeting
May 18, 2010

Task force members present

Rose Yamada, Chair
Billy Akutagawa
Pancho Alcon
Daniel Espaniola
Wendy Espaniola
Janice Espiritu
Karen Holt
Lydia Trinidad
Joe Yamamoto
Ronald Davis

DOE staff present

Lindsay Ball, complex area superintendent
Randy Moore, assistant superintendent

Community members present (who signed in)

Rochelle Borden,
Kimberly Pagan
Alyssa Cacpal
Denise Alameida
Veronica Nuuanu
Luana Kamai
Shayna Kamai
Chrissy McCutcheon
Toni Yamamoto
Nola Reilly
Catherine Cluett
Laura Gomes
Liko Mawae

Call to order

Ms. Yamada called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

Review of agenda

Ms. Yamada reviewed the agenda and the process for the meeting. The two primary purposes for the evening are to:

- 1) Consider community input from Public Hearing, Task Force members' individual recommendations and
- 2) Agree on recommendations and finalization of Study Report for formal transmittal to Complex Area Superintendent.

Minutes of the meeting of March 23, 2010

Upon motion duly made, seconded, and unanimously carried, the minutes of the meeting of March 23, 2010, were approved as circulated.

Communication

Ms. Yamada thanked Ms. Holt for the references from the New York Times and said the information would be included in the appendix to the task force report.

Ms. Yamada acknowledged Mr. Moore's memorandum commenting on the public hearing draft of the task force report.

Deliberations and discussion on the task force report.

Ms. Yamada distributed a revised draft task force report. The revisions only include those pages that had been changed from the public hearing draft report.

Ms. Yamada led the task force through an extended discussion of Mr. Moore's input to the draft and noted where revisions to the task force report had already been made with further revisions to be made. Some salient points:

- Mr. Moore's intent is to ensure accuracy where possible.
- Ms. Trinidad shared her experience with busing cost and number of students per bus, which differed from the input.
- Ms. Holt questioned the source and basis for the \$1,000,000 estimate for repairs immediately needed should the school remain open.
- Ms. Yamada questioned the wisdom of displaying HSA scores (proportions proficient) of economically disadvantaged compared to not economically disadvantaged.

Mr. Ball asked the principals to furnish him data on the number of behavior referrals to the counselors or offices of their schools this year, to support public testimony at previous task force meetings that students are better behaved at Maunaloa because of the small size and close-knit community.

Discussion and deliberation on final recommendation(s)

Members have been studying the students, schools, and research, and listening to testimonies from community members from Maunaloa and other areas of the

island. Each member was asked to share his/her mana`o and individual recommendation.

- Ms. Espiritu, as principal of Kaunakakai School, emphasized that her school welcomes all students. In her deliberation of consolidation, she said that it is not based just on finances – money is not and should not be the driving force. What is best for the kids, for the families, and for the community should be the foundation for the recommendation. Therefore, Ms. Espiritu recommended that Maunaloa School be kept open:
 - In consideration of the hardships projected from the dislocation and distance. For example, to participate equally in the programs of the school, including after-school services, Maunaloa children will have a significantly longer day. Parent involvement will definitely suffer.
 - In support of the strategic improvement actions of the school that will sustain and strengthen the Maunaloa community including servicing children from pre-school through grade 8 and upgrading/retooling adult career/job skills.
- Mr. Akutagawa shared his input from the personal perspective (growing up on the East end of Molokai) and professional perspective (administrator of health services). His recommendation is to support and keep Maunaloa School open:
 - In communities on Molokai that are small and geographically separated, the neighborhood school is a critical and integral part of each. Schools grow around their communities, reflecting the culture of each community. He cited the events and activities of Kilohana as examples.
 - While Maunaloa has had more than its share of socio-economic problems, the school is essential to its survival. He stressed that there is always the potential of growth, especially for the West end of Molokai, and Maunaloa School is the only school in the area. Molokai needs the diversity.
 - There are some immediate negative effects on the children (e.g., transportation over the distance) and the impact on the receiving school such as Kaunakakai (e.g., facilities).
- Ms. Trinidad stated that if Maunaloa School is closed, she is confident that the children are going to be okay. As a school principal, she knows that both Kualapuu and Kaunakakai will do well by the students. She also has experience with the busing of children who attend Kualapuu from both ends of the island in order to participate in the island's only elementary Hawaiian immersion program or in the charter school programs. However, Ms. Trinidad recommends keeping Maunaloa School open for the sake of the community. She stressed the importance of re-building the energy of the school and the community, toward a much needed re-invention. This re-invention is long-ranged and contributes to the economic, job and career environment of the island.
- Mr. Alcon noted that the students are doing well, according to parent testimonies and school data. Although he is not sure of what “re-

inventions” are needed, the strength of the school has shown to be in helping children with specific or special needs. From his perspective as a community and business leader of Molokai, Mr. Alcon recommended that Maunaloa School be kept open:

- In his concern for the community, the school can take the leadership in holding the community together.
- With the school’s effectiveness in meeting special needs of children, it can serve to expand these services to children of other communities.
- Mr. Yamamoto spoke as a parent of children attending the school. He also shared his input as principal of Maunaloa School. He is against consolidation of Maunaloa:
 - The size and services of the school have been effective.
 - Programs and services here are constantly undergoing re-invention to meet changing needs.
 - One of the re-invention actions that will support and strengthen transition of the children is the re-alignment of services to grades K-8.
- Mr. Espaniola provided insight into the depth of the history and traditions related to Maunaloa School. He asked, “How can we really quantify the social impact of closing the school?” The action will have a trickling-down effect on the whole island. The question, he noted, is not whether Kualapuu or Kaunakakai is better, but, rather, what is the effect on the children? As a parent and resident, he is against consolidation:
 - There are committed people in the community willing and ready to do what is needed to maintain the school.
 - Keeping the services here may mean a reduction of resources to this school, but it can be run as a business that operates within available resources.
- Mr. Davis shared the analogy of shortage of funding for the Fire Department and considering closing a station, from his perspective of being the former Fire Chief for Maui. He stated that Maunaloa School should be kept open, and expressed concerns:
 - What weight does the Task Force recommendation have in relations to the final decision?
 - With closure, what happens when the economy makes an upward turn?
- Ms. Espaniola provided her input as a teacher at Maunaloa, a parent, and a resident of Maunaloa. She recommended keeping the school open based on the value of the learning environment for the children, the commitment of the community and employees of the school, and the function the school serves in relation to the Maunaloa community and the broader Molokai community.
- Ms. Holt stated that the school should be kept open, from her perspective as a professional lawyer and a leader in community services to Molokai. She noted that quantifying many important factors is very difficult. While

- the institution may be looking forward to “financial savings,” we need to look forward to what the school is “saving” for society in the long run.
- Characteristics of poverty or low SES are often correlated to negative social outcomes.
 - By providing the kinds of close and caring relationships in the education of the children, Maunaloa is contributing to the prevention of those negative social outcomes that burden society.
- Ms. Yamada contributed her input by summarizing that there was unanimous agreement for keeping Maunaloa School open. After discussion of strategies for completing the Task Force Report, the members agreed:
- The primary recommendation will be for keeping the school open.
 - The task force supports strategic actions to be undertaken by the school.

Public Testimony

None

Next steps

Key dates were agreed upon as follow:

1. Faculty Discussion of Maunaloa School's Strategic Actions - Friday, May 21, 2010
2. Principals' Collection and Transmittal of current Behavior Referrals to Yamada - soon as you can
2. Transmittal of Maunaloa School's Strategic Actions to Yamada - Tuesday, June 1, 2010
3. Final TF Report Transmittal to Supt. Ball - Friday, June 4, 2010

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.