



NATURAL ENERGY LABORATORY OF HAWAII AUTHORITY

An Authority of the State of Hawaii attached to the Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING MINUTES
January 23, 2024
1 p.m.**

An Interactive Conference Technology Meeting was held at

**NELHA OceanView Conference Room
Hale Iako Building
73-970 Makako Bay Drive
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740**

DBEDT Conference Room

and via Zoom Video Conferencing Software.

Members/Designees in Attendance

Cyd Miyashiro (Gov. Appointee/Chair)
Gordon Bruce (Gov. Appointee)
Noelani Kalipi (Gov. Appointee)
Dane Wicker (DBEDT)
Doug Adams (County of Hawaii)
Gregory Kim (HTDC)
Alan Hilton (RAC Chair)
Neil Sims (Tenant Representative)
Dr. Vassilis Syrmos (University of Hawaii)
Russell Tsuji (DLNR)
Dr. Philip Bossert (RAC Secretary)
Robert Command (County of Hawaii)
(Note only from 11:04 to 11:11p when D. Adams joined)

Guests/Staff Present

Greg Barbour (NELHA)
Laurence Sombardier (NELHA)
Keith Olson (NELHA)
Rae Nguyen (NELHA)
Faustine Edge (NELHA)
Bryan Babbitt (NELHA)
Alex Leonard (NELHA)
Jeff Zimpfer, (National Park Service)
John Cole (AG)
Ben Creps (First Law Center)
Cherie Kauahi
Mark Ladao (Member of the Public)
Nathan Tsao (Jamestown Point Whitney Ventures)
KB Chun (DHHL)
Bobby Command (County of Hawaii)

Board Members Not Attending and Excused

Dick Jones (Tenant Representative)

73-4460 Queen Kaahumanu Hwy., #101, Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i USA 96740-2637
Phone: (808) 327-9585 Fax: (808) 327-9586 Email: nelha@nelha.org Website:
<http://www.nelha.hawaii.gov>

- **Item 1. Call to Order.**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Cyd Miyashiro at 1:04 p.m. Chair Miyashiro asked Executive Director (ED) Barbour for a roll call of Board members and NELHA staff. Reference to Act 220. 9 members present and 3 excused.

Director Kalipi joined the meeting at 1:08 p.m.

Chair Miyashiro explained that Agenda Item #3 Old Business would be moved to after Agenda Item #6, Executive Director's Information Status Report.

- **Item 2. Approval October 17, 2023, NELHA Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes.**

Chair Miyashiro entertained a motion to approve the October 17, 2023, minutes. The motion was made by Director Kalipi and seconded by Director Hilton. Chair Miyashiro asked if there are any objections. Director Bruce commented to make an edit to his name using his last name, Bruce, instead of Gordon. The minutes were approved as amended (10-0).

Director Adams joined the meeting at 1:11 p.m.

Director Command continued attendance as an observer.

- **Item 4a. New Business. Discussion and Decision-Making regarding nomination of Mr. Ned Murphy to be appointed to the Research Advisory Committee (RAC).**

Chair Miyashiro asked RAC Chair and Director Hilton, the RAC Chair, to present this agenda item. Director Hilton began Mr. Murphy expressed interest in joining the NELHA RAC and is a former colleague of Tom Reed (a former RAC member) who passed away about a year ago.

Mr. Murphy has very strong technical, scientific, and professional business skills as well as an educational background in Oceanography. He has a long history of environmental consulting regarding contamination in soil and groundwater and extensive experience in remediation projects.

His strong background in oceanography, biogeochemistry, related technologies and his business experience in Hawaii as an environmental consultant will be invaluable in reviewing proposals.

Chair Miyashiro opened for board discussion. Hearing and seeing no Board comments, she asked for public comments. Hearing and seeing none, Director Hilton motioned to make the appointment. Director Bruce seconded the motion. There were no objections and Mr. Murphy's appointment to the RAC was approved (10-0).

- **Item 4b. New Business. Discussion and Decision-Making regarding nomination of Ms. Cherie Kauahi to be appointed to the Research Advisory Committee (RAC).**

Chair Miyashiro asked ED Barbour to present this agenda item. ED Barbour began he is very pleased to nominate Ms. Kauahi to our RAC. Ms. Kauahi has an extensive educational background in Tropical Conservation Biology, Environmental and Marine Science. Her professional experience includes the UH Sea Grant Program as an agricultural extension agent and affiliate faculty at UH Hilo. Her recent grant awards address issues associated with climate change, workforce development and aquaculture development in the Pacific. Recent publications include a significant focus on traditional aquaculture practices and fishpond restoration. Ms. Kauahi has been instrumental in assisting NELHA to establish a cultural hui composed of Hawaii Island kupuna, lineal descendants of lands on which HOST Park is situated, Aha Moku, NELHA Board member and staff to seek input, feedback, and suggestions on how to improve NELHA's plans to address the community needs and expectations to ensure that plans reflect the community's diverse perspectives and interests.

This background in traditional and contemporary aquaculture practices will be invaluable in reviewing proposals.

ED Barbour asked if Ms. Kauahi would like to make a statement. Ms. Kauahi added to ED Barbour's comments that her background is mostly local, Hawaiian fishponds, and she would like to bring that perspective to the discussions if appointed.

Chair Miyashiro opened for Board discussion. Director Kalipi offered her strong support for the appointment to the RAC. Her technical and cultural perspective is vitally important to assist with the RAC, and she thanked her for her willingness to be considered.

Director Sims agreed with Director Kalipi, and he added this is an admirable step forward for NELHA, and thanked Ms. Kauahi.

Director Adams agreed with both Director Kalipi and Director Sims, this background and the local focus is terrific.

Chair Miyashiro asked if there were any comments from the public. Hearing and seeing none, Director Bossert motioned to approve the appointment. Director Kalipi seconded. There were no objections, and Ms. Kauahi's appointment to the RAC is approved (10-0). Chair Miyashiro congratulated both Ms. Kauahi and Mr. Murphy, and she thanked them for sharing their willingness to service.

- **Item 4c. New Business. Discussion and Decision-Making regarding Memorandum of Understanding between Hawaii Department of Agriculture, Agribusiness Development Corporation, Hawaii Technology Development Corporation, and NELHA to Further Develop and Grow the Aquaculture Industry in Hawaii.**

Chair Miyashiro asked ED Barbour to present this agenda item.

Director Syrmos joined the meeting at 1:20 p.m.

ED Barbour explained NELHA staff is requesting an approval to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA), Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC), Hawaii Technology Development Corporation (HTDC), and NELHA.

ED Barbour continued there has been some controversy in the legislature this year on whether NELHA should be involved in aquaculture. DBEDT Deputy Director (DD) Wicker suggested that if we start talking to each other, get out of our silos and work more closely together we would be able to bring to our boards a plan that would define our roles and how, together, we will grow the aquaculture industry.

This MOU is a standard non-binding document similar to an MOU with the University of Hawaii and HSDC which the Board approved in the past. It has been reviewed by our Deputy Attorney General (Deputy AG) as well as the Deputy AGs for ADC and the HDTDC. It has not yet been reviewed by the HDOA. DD Wicker has suggested we continue to build on this agreement by adding Workforce Development with the Department of Business Economic Development and Tourism and University of Hawaii.

Director Wicker added he has learned that NELHA plays a critical role in the incubator space with Hatch as a partner. By working with other sister agencies under DBEDT, such as ADC, we can help with the transition as companies incubate out of NELHA and are looking for a place to expand their business across the State. The big picture down the road is that NELHA and ADC can look at ways to expand on neighbor islands.

This MOU documents the intended relationship between the agencies to encourage, support, and facilitate planning, implementation, research related activities. Program and project coordination, information sharing of other relevant expertise, project management and joint activities or actions taken need to be consistent with the mission of each agency to support identification of opportunities to grow the aquaculture sector in Hawai'i. This MOU contains the standard boilerplate language as contained in other MOU's approved by the Board. It is a non-binding MOU intended to lay out the purpose and general policy areas of cooperation to share resources to identify growth opportunities and provide experts and

resources as needed to complete this work. It generally describes management and program guidelines and the scope of collaboration of the intentions of each agency.

Staff recommends that the Board approve the attached draft MOU with ADC, HTDC and DOA for cooperation to grow aquaculture in Hawaii. Staff also recommends that the NELHA Executive Director be authorized to make minor modifications to the draft document in consultation with ADC, HTDC and DOA, and with approval from the NELHA Deputy Attorney General.

Chair Miyashiro opened for discussion. Director Adams expressed the County is pleased to see this effort in aquaculture. He added for record that the County is also working with the University of Hawaii's Pacific Aquaculture and Coastal Resources Center (PACRC) and looking at aquaculture opportunities on the east side in addition to what NELHA is doing on the west side. Hopefully at some point we may be able to combine all these efforts.

Director Sims commented that it is admirable to have an expression of collaboration such as this MOU. He asked ED Barbour what will be the actual, tangible manifestation of the MOU and whether there will be regular meetings or some other mechanism for coordinating and communicating.

ED Barbour responded the MOU does not include meeting specifics but it might be a good idea to have quarterly meetings or something along those lines. Director Wicker added the MOU is a tool that can be revised as needed in the future.

Director Bruce motioned to approve the MOU. Director Sims seconded. There were no objections and the MOU between Hawaii Department of Agriculture, Agribusiness Development Corporation, Hawaii Technology Development Corporation, and NELHA to Further Develop and Grow the Aquaculture Industry in Hawaii is approved (11-0)

- **Item 7. Financial Report: Approval and Decision Making.**

Chair Miyashiro asked ED Barbour to present this agenda item.

ED Barbour presented an overview for July 2023 through December 31, 2023.

Revenue

- Total revenue was \$2.4 million for the first half of the fiscal year and this represents a decrease of almost \$270,000 or 10 percent for the same period last year. Of notice for FY24 are the following:
 - Overall seawater system revenue is down by \$230,000 or almost 25 percent. This is mainly due to a 15 percent drop (\$120,000) in surface seawater revenue combined with lower electricity rates decreasing the electrical surcharge by \$110,000 or 55 percent over the same period last year.

- Overall lease rent is up by \$30,000 (3 percent) for the first half of fiscal year 2024. More specifically, this is due to an increase in Land Base Rent and Research Campus office rental revenue which are each up approximately \$45,000.
- Percent rent is down due to payment of arrears for the same period last year.
- Labor services are up a healthy 85% or \$30,000. Most of this is from an expanded contract with the Department of Health. We are doing quite a bit of their water sampling from around the State.
- Reimbursements for electric are down by \$100,000 or 30 percent and due to lower electrical costs. Freshwater revenue includes a double payment and will even out in our report for March.

ED Barbour asked if there were any questions on revenue. Hearing none he continued with expenditures.

Expenditures

- Total expenses (preliminary) for the first half of the fiscal year were approximately \$2.3M or down by \$150,000 (6%). This decrease is mainly due to the cost of electricity which peaked last summer, and insurance premium (\$100,000) not yet received. We continue to monitor expenditures very closely. Of note are the following:
 - Seawater system expenditures were down by \$400,000 due to lower electrical rate as well as the new microgrid coming online in July. ED Barbour referenced a chart graph that sample one day with microgrid fully operational (December 15, 2023). He noted they could see load is just under 200kW when the sun comes up at 8:00 a.m. It then drops to virtually zero when the sun goes down and the battery runs out. This 10 hours is better than they had expected. Because every day is different, and ED Barbour pointed out on the previous day, December 14, 2023, we gave back power to Hawaiian Electric. He further explained that when we designed our load our demand was about 30% higher. Now that we have the systems running fairly smoothly, we could possibly tweak the system by taking more water from the main 55" pump station and rely less on the research campus pump station, but this will take 6-12 months. We feel we can easily maintain in the end no real load from the grid for almost half the day. Referencing back to financial report, this is one of the reasons cost for expenses for seawater system has gone down so much.

Director Gordon asked why we are not being reimbursed for power we give back to Hawaiian Electric. ED Barbour explained it's because we don't have any form of net metering agreement or any agreement with them. They have approved our

installation of PV, but with the stipulation that if it produces more than we need, it goes back on grid. Also, because there are certain quotas for certain circuits around the island and the State and the grid at Keahole point is one of most saturated grids, you can't get an agreement with Hawaiian Electric. We carefully designed the system, and it would be perfect if seawater demand didn't drop.

Director Sims asked is there an estimate of the value of market rate of the electricity we are giving back to Hawaiian Electric or alternatively, are we planning to adjust the system so that there is nothing going back to the grid? ED Barbour confirmed that we would increase our load from 200 to the 220-230 range. We're working with Hawaiian Electric now to design the consolidation of the microgrid in the Research Campus to add the farm compound. Jamestown Whitney has already been added with plans to add Taylor Shellfish and a couple of other farms.

- Tenant utilities were down by 6 percent with a decrease in the \$80,000 due in electrical reimbursement offset by an increase in freshwater reimbursements.
- NELHA utilities are up with an accounting change showing costs of PPA only which will align with power consumption after power meter is corrected.
- HOST Park Ground Maintenance is up 100% with the new groundskeeper and reopening of the bathrooms after major repairs. We were top heavy, so we reorganized and eliminated one of the positions, an Operations Officer position, with salary over \$100,000, and changed it to a Ground Maintenance position. The management responsibilities were reallocated to the Operations and Science Officer position.
- NELHA Staffing. We lost three key people to retirement which is significant for our small group. Two had worked here for over 10 years and one for 33 years. We have received approval to fill two of the positions and hope to have those positions filled in the next several months.
- Insurance has gone up dramatically. Last year it increased from \$30,000 to \$100,000 and this year \$100,000 to \$160,000. We will have to find ways to use savings and cut back, but it will be difficult. We have been speaking with other State agencies, and all have similar increases. It seems to be Statewide and probably due to volcano and wildfires.

Director Sims asked what the insurance was for. ED Barbour answered it is for property insurance. Director Bruce asked if we are required to use the State program or is there opportunity to be self-insured. Director Tsuji responded the State is self-insured to an extent. He believes DAGS carries a policy that kicks in

after \$20 million. Director Bruce asked if NELHA requires in its leases that tenants carry insurance. Deputy Director (DD) Sombardier confirmed the leases do. Director Bruce asked why we are covering liability if we already require it from the tenants. ED Barbour responded that NELHA has major pump stations on property and a 55" seawater pipe which goes to 3,000 feet. If a tsunami or an earthquake breaks the pipe it would be tens of millions of dollars to repair. Director Bruce stated that we don't want to put more burden on the tenants, but suggested the possibility of adding a common maintenance charge for insurance. Director Sims commented that even if it's not in the CAM it might still come out of the tenant's pockets by being included into the rental rate. Director Sims suggested going the self-insurance route.

- Administrative expenses are up by \$160,000 (25%) with office supplies, insurance premium (up \$70,000) and purchase of new computers.

Special Fund and Arrears

- Special fund balance is \$1,000,000 and flat over the past six months.
- As of December 31, 2023, the arrears are low and totaled approximately \$50,000 which is mainly over percentage rent from Ocean Rider and a late payment for World Triathlon Corp.

ED Barbour closed his Financial Report. Chair Miyashiro opened for discussion and asked if there were any questions or comments.

Chair Miyashiro asked if there were any comments, questions from the public. There were none. Director Bruce motioned to approve the financial report covering July 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023. Director Adams seconded the motion. Motion carried as presented (11-0).

- **Item 8. Executive Director's Informational Status Report on ongoing projects including: new leases; seawater system maintenance; offshore deep seawater pipe removal planning and design; regional seawater air conditioning planning and design; new potable water supply update; aquaculture accelerator and investment fund initiative; design of expansion of research campus and visitor center; renewable distributed energy resources initiative for microgrid; and, solar desalination.***

Chair Miyashiro asked ED Barbour to present this agenda item.

In the self-sufficiency category, the Symbrosia lease for 15 acres the Board approved at the October 17, 2023 Board of Directors meeting is fully executed.

Kona Sablefish has an approval in concept, and they needed additional time to raise capital. They are making progress and are keeping us apprised of their discussions.

We have been working on completing four agreements with the University of Hawaii. They have a new system this year, and we had to completely revamp the leases. During this time, they continue paying their rent. Director Syrmos explained the reason behind the change was in the past The Research Corporation of the University of Hawaii (RCUH) was in charge of the leases and now these are handled by the Real Estate Development Office under Kalbert Young. ED Barbour expects the leases will be completed soon, and thanked Deputy AG Cole, DD Sombardier and Rae Nguyen for all their work to get the leases completed.

Marketing. ED Director asked DD Sombardier to present this item. DD Sombardier explained that the Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant we received a couple of years ago had a \$100,000 line item to assist with a marketing push for HOST Park. Our current NELHA website uses the State of Hawaii template. We felt it would be advantageous to have a HOST Park website highlighting what goes on in the park to attract companies and develop that pipeline to bring more startups into the park. This site could also assist with outreach to the general public and community at large. We hired Tetrachrome, a local firm based out of Hilo. The funding was used to 1) create several success stories 2) develop an interactive online website that would allow people to visit the park. DD Sombardier shared the website "Discover HOST Park". It is a very visual site with lots of pictures highlighting the Park's assets. We reached out to all our clients to find out what level of engagement they wanted to be at. Some the clients did not want to be involved at all, so we left those clients out of the interactive tour. Some clients only wanted their name and website listed. And, we had others that wanted to be much more engaged.. The website's virtual tour of the park includes a variety of drone footage, pictures of staff and park activities, links to client websites, an underwater camera which is off of the Ka'u Pump Station and much more. It takes about an hour to view everything on the site. Visitors can now have fun learning more about HOST Park, and we hope new businesses will be able to envision themselves at HOST Park. DD Sombardier added we plan to build out more to address pre-HOST Park pages as well as the historical and cultural aspects of the Park. Our immediate intent for the site was to showcase what is currently happening at the Park to get businesses excited to come here.

Directors Bruce and Sims commented the website is impressive. ED Barbour thanked DD Sombardier, NELHA's Marketing and Leasing Specialist Rae Nguyen, and Tetrachrome for their work on the project. ED Barbour commented that HOST Park is on the west side of

Hawaii Island and is a very visual place and DD Sombardier and her team have been able take advantage of the visual appeal of the property here.

Seawater Quality Analysis. Some of the hatcheries are experiencing larval mortality and some of the businesses at HOST Park have been looking into this issue on their own, but they do not have the time to collect data and look at the relationship trends to identify the cause amongst the many variables. We hired Dr. Jim Wyban with the Notice to Proceed (NTP) issued last week. Dr. Wyban is the “father” of the shrimp broodstock industry in Hawaii, and has a very good reputation. He understands these issues and was here at HOST park for at 10-15 years. ED Barbour thinks he is the perfect person to work with the businesses. We had a kickoff meeting with our staff and the Department of Agriculture staff including their Chief Veterinarian, Dr. Brodsky.

Microgrid at 55” Pump Station. We are still waiting for final permits from the County of Hawaii and from Hawaiian Electric. The last major issue which could take some time is that the container that the battery is not Underwriters Laboratory (UL) approved. It came directly from LG in Korea and, for some reason they overlooked the need to have it UL Approved. We will maintain operations in a test phase until it can be inspected late March 2024.

Seawater Rate Analysis. We can start this now that we have the microgrid running. It wouldn’t have been prudent to do that study before we could understand the power adjustments resulting from the microgrid.

New Roads. We have requested \$18 million for two roads: the airport connector road and the Kahilihili south extension. This is in the Legislature, in the Governor’s budget at this time. Director Sims asked if funds were included to repair to the road just past the beach park. ED Barbour answered, this item is in our own special fund under limited repairs \$100,000 for maintenance.

Water Well/Drilling Permit. We have \$5 million requested as part of our budget request in the Governor’s budget to drill the exploratory well. ED Barbour offered an update because much progress has been made. NELHA met with Chair Chang at DLNR last July after Legislative session , and she suggested NELHA reach out to various entities and groups in regards to the conditions NELHA didn’t agree with. ED Barbour explained those two conditions were: 1) makai monitoring near shore monitoring, and 2) mauka watershed management providing funds to the DLNR Division of Forestry. ED Barbour continued that after meeting with stakeholders, we have made significant progress on proposing admendments to conditions 1.a and 1.d.. None of the stakeholders voiced opposition. The organizations we spoke with include: State Officials, County Officials, lineal descendants to the area, Aha Moku, Federal Agencies, experts at University of Hawaii, Department of Health, Leeward Planning Commission, Chamber of Commerce, representatives of the

Mayor's Office, the Division of Aquatic Resources. ED Barbour believes NELHA's Administration and Projects Manager, Mr. Alex Leonard has a well-crafted and elegant solution. We did not want to duplicate the efforts of other State agencies conducting for monitoring. It can be difficult to determine relationship between ground water and near shore waters. We are proposing to drill two monitoring wells which we do very well as we have 34 monitoring wells on our 900 acres. The two State property locations are in Kona town, one at Old Airport which is State property and one mauka of the Queen's Palace. There also is a County Park further to the south that Department of Water Supply (DWS) thought would be a good alternate site.

ED Barbour continued to that no agency is monitoring groundwater between the highway and the shoreline. So, our solution is that we would do that monitoring as part of our operations, and possibly build a larger regional monitoring system if we all started working together. We would also monitor anchialine ponds in downtown Kailua-Kona.

We would like to have meeting with Chair Chang over the next couple of weeks to get on the agenda for DLNR's Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM) in February or March

For the Mauka issue, providing \$15,000 per year to the Division of Forestry, we are proposing to generally agree to this condition as neither Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation or NELHA are opposed to this condition with the stipulation that it is only for 30 years and not in perpetuity.

ED Barbour addressed the question in chat from Mr./Mrs. KB Chun about including DHHL in the discussion. ED Barbour answered that we did speak with Kali Watson Chair DHHL as they are a partner in the well with us (they receive 2.6% of the water).

Offshore Freshwater Survey. We're still waiting on DLNR to secure that permit.

Cultural Hui. We had a good meeting with the Hui in December and we didn't have one this month.

Environmental Impact Survey Offshore Research Corridor. We are in a procurement phase. We will include a Master Plan and Strategic Plan update.

Reports. The 2022-2023 annual report is complete. The UHERO economic impact report for calendar year 2022 is also completed. For workforce development activities, see winter 2023/2024 newsletter.

Legislature. A major issue brought up in this year's legislature is to what degree should NELHA focus on aquaculture because the word aquaculture is not in our statutes. ED Barbour commented that our statutes are very broad, and there is reference to ocean related research, ocean related technology and ocean industry. All of the aquaculture businesses depend on seawater for their livelihood. We believe this is something that needs further discussion

Grants. Lastly, ED Barbour updated that we did apply for the Ocean Research and Technology Accelerator funding with NOAA. We were unsuccessful but the University of Hawaii did receive an award and they have reached out to us to work together..

Director Syrmos left at 2:26 p.m.

Director Wicker left at 2:30 p.m.

Chair Miyashiro asked if with Directors Syrmos and Wicker leaving the meeting if we still had quorum. ED Barbour confirmed yes, we have quorum with 9 Directors.

Deputy AG John Cole reviewed sunshine law requirements, specifically as it relates to serial communications and Special Investigative Committee Activities.

- **Item 3. Report from Special Investigative Committee regarding the annual performance evaluation of the NELHA Executive Director.**

Chair Miyashiro made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel issues. Seconded by Director Bruce. Chair Miyashiro asked for any objections. There were none and 9-0 vote to go into Executive Session. The Board entered the Executive Session at 2:33 p.m. Director Sims called back the board attendees to return at 2:44 p.m.

Upon return, Chair Miyashiro stated that the report on the performance review of the NELHA Executive Director for the fiscal year 2023 covering the period from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 was presented and circulated. Under the rules for Permitted Interaction Groups (PIG), two board actions are expected at the next Board meeting: one will be the approval of the evaluation of the NELHA Executive Director for the Fiscal Year 2023 and a the second will be to seek approval to create a special investigative committee to evaluate the proposed goals and recommendations for fiscal year 2024.

- **Item 8. Announcements.**

Chair Miyashiro noted that our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. She continued that prior to COVID the majority of the NELHA board meetings

were in person, and she would like to return to in person periodically for the sake of collaboration and facilitation of board matters. Ideally, she would like all the directors to meet in person at NELHA, but given that the Legislature is in session, it might not be feasible. If there are travel conflicts with session and quorum cannot be reached, we would meet in person in two locations, NELHA and Honolulu.

- **Item 9. Adjournment.**

Chair Miyashiro adjourned the meeting at 2:47 p.m.

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