



# 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

March 17, 2026

1:00 p.m.

**DRAFT**

**An Interactive Conference Technology Meeting was held at**

**NELHA OceanView Conference Room**

**Hale Iako Building**

**73-970 Makako Bay Drive**

**Kailua-Kona, HI 96740**

**and via Zoom Video Conferencing Software.**

#### **Members/Designees in Attendance**

Noelani Kalipi (Gov. Appointee/Chair)  
Gordon Bruce (Gov. Appointee)  
Dr. John Wiltshire (RAC Secretary)  
Benson Medina (County of Hawaii)  
Dave Molinaro (DBEDT Director Office)  
Manu Tupper (DLNR)  
Nathan Tsao (Tenant Representative)  
Dane Wicker (DBEDT Director Office)

#### **Board Members Not Attending and Excused**

Cyd Miyashiro (Gov. Appointee/Vice Chair)  
Neil Sims (Tenant Representative)  
Alan Hilton (RAC Chair)  
Dr. Chad Walton (University of Hawaii)

#### **Guests/Staff Present**

Laurence Sombardier (NELHA)  
Keith Olson (NELHA)  
Pam Madden (NELHA)  
Bryan Babbitt (NELHA)  
John Cole (AG)  
Federico Rotman (Blue Ocean Mariculture)  
Jeff Zimpher (National Park Services)  
Tom Fee (HHF Planners)  
Srkmv (unknown affiliation)  
Will Kane (Governor's Office)  
Donn Ariyoshi (Ariyoshi Family Foundation)  
Lisa Ariyoshi (Ariyoshi Family Foundation)  
Angie Chapman (unknown affiliation)  
Lance Tsuchiyama (unknown affiliation)

**A meeting recording is not available.**

#### **Item 1. Call to Order.**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Noelani Kalipi at 1:02pm Chair Kalipi asked Deputy Director Laurence Sombardier (DD Sombardier) for a roll call of Board members and NELHA staff. Reference to Act 220. 8 members were present and 4 excused.

- **Item 2. Approval of NELHA Board of Directors' November 18, 2025, Executive Meeting Minutes.**

Chair Kalipi entertained a motion to approve the November 18, 2025, executive minutes. Director Wiltshire moved to approve the minutes, and the motion was seconded by Director Kaina. Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved (7-0).

- **Item 3. Approval of NELHA Board of Directors' January 20, 2026, Meeting Minutes.**

Chair Kalipi entertained a motion to approve the January 20, 2026, minutes. Director Tsao moved to approve the minutes, and the motion was seconded by Director Wiltshire. Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved (7-0).

- **Item 4. Approval of NELHA Board of Directors' January 20, 2026, Executive Meeting Minutes.**

Chair Kalipi entertained a motion to approve the January 20, 2026, executive minutes. Director Wiltshire moved to approve the minutes, and the motion was seconded by Director Tsao. Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved (7-0).

- **Item 5. Public Testimony.**

Mr. Donn Ariyoshi asked if his testimony in support of honoring his father, Governor George Ariyoshi by renaming HOST Park in his honor was appropriate under this agenda item. Chair Kalipi explained that there is a specific agenda item for this later and asked if time was of concern in which case the renaming item could be pushed forward. Mr. Ariyoshi responded that he would wait.

- **Item 6.a. Old Business. Update and discussion regarding the Amended Complaint Filed by Keahole Point Hatcheries LLC on October 28, 2025\*.**

Chair Kalipi stated they might be discussing this item in Executive Session to consult with the Board's Deputy Attorney General (AG) Cole on issues pertaining to the Board's powers, duties, privileges, immunities, and liabilities pursuant to HRS § 92-5, subsection (a)(4). AG Cole suggested that he provide a summary in public and that if Board Directors have follow-up questions requiring executive session that executive session can be entered into at that time.

AG Cole explained that there is not a lot of new information to convey. A trial date has been set for April 12, 2027. Plaintiffs have filed a First Request for Answers to Interrogatories as well as a First Request for Production of Documents. AG Cole has discussed these with Chair Kalipi and DD Sombardier and information is being gathered.

There were no questions for AG Cole and an executive session was not necessary.

- **Item 6.b. Old Business. Report from Special Investigative Committee regarding the annual performance evaluation of the NELHA Executive Director for the period February 2025 through January 2026\*\*.**

Chair Kalipi stated they might be discussing this item in Executive Session pursuant to section 92-5(a)(2), HRS to consider the hire, evaluation, dismissal, or discipline of an officer or employee or of charges brought against the officer or employee, where consideration of matters affecting privacy will be involved; provided that if the individual concerned requests an open meeting, an open meeting shall be held.

AG Cole reminded Chair that once the committee is ready to provide a full report with final findings, the Board can only act at the following Board meeting. He also added that the Special Investigative Committee can provide a short update without going into executive session if no confidential information pertaining to personnel is revealed in public.

Chair Kalipi responded that she would provide a short update. The Committee consists of Chair Kalipi, Vice Chair Miyashiro and Director Walton. She said that she has not had the chance to speak with Executive Director Saito and therefore expects the report to be provided to the Board at the next Board meeting.

- **Item 7.a. New Business. Discussion and Decision-Making regarding the Request by Governor Green to rename HOST Park in honor of Governor George R. Ariyoshi.**

Chair Kalipi asked if there was a presentation. DD Sombardier responded that Mr. Will Kane, Senior Advisor to Governor Green had joined to present via Zoom. Mr. Kane explained that Governor George Ariyoshi was instrumental in the formation of NELHA and that HOST Park was one of his administration's signature projects.

Mr. Donn Ariyoshi, Governor Ariyoshi's son, reiterated that NELHA and HOST Park were very important to his father and that his father was very proud of the facility and what it has accomplished over the decades. When asked what should be named after him, he requested that he would be honored if HOST Park was named after him.

Ms. Lisa Ariyoshi from Ariyoshi Family and Friends echoed what Mr. Ariyoshi said. And added that the naming would acknowledge the great champion that Governor Ariyoshi was during the formative years of the park.

Director Wilshire stated that he had the honor to work with Governor Ariyoshi from 1986 to 1993 and he fully supports the request.

Director Molinaro also expressed support.

Chair Kalipi stated that she also supports the request and expressed gratitude for Governor Ariyoshi's support during her time working with Senator Akaka.

There were no further questions or discussions by Board members.

Chair Kalipi entertained a motion to approve the request by Governor Green to rename HOST Park in honor of Governor Ariyoshi. Director Wilshire moved first, and the motion was seconded by Director Molinaro. Hearing no objections, the motion was approved (7-0).

- **Item 7.b. New Business. Discussion and Decision-Making regarding proposed NELHA Seawater Flush and Utility Maintenance Plan for 2026.**

Chair Kalipi asked if there was a presentation. DD Sombardier provided a summary for this agenda item. She explained that NELHA conducted 6 high volume flushes in the last year and a half. While there are still some concerns by some clients that these flushes can disrupt stable bio-communities in pipelines, most felt that the flushes do remove silt, deposits and biofouling and that these are helpful. The 6 test flushes provided a basis to develop a methodology including timing which is presented in a plan that was included in the Board packet.

DD Sombardier also explained that the plan includes downtime for maintenance. Maintenance needs an absence of water in the pipelines and therefore cannot be conducted at the same time as flushes which require the opposite (i.e., increase the water in the pipelines).

DD Sombardier stated that the plan is being brought to the Board as advised by the AG's office, for high level input, in particular for guidance relating to whether a signed waiver by the tenants would be appropriate.

After receiving input from the Board, NELHA plans to distribute the plan to all stakeholders, not just the larval group, and obtain feedback. The feedback can be incorporated into the plan and depending on what Board's guidance is, staff can bring a revised plan back to the Board or proceed with implementation.

Director Wilshire asked if ice pigging was still being considered as he thought it was a good idea but did not see it in the plan. DD Sombardier responded that staff is still contemplating ice pigging but that more work is needed on that end. We have received feedback that it would be advisable to engage the services of a professional firm to assist with implementation. But, ice pigging is not part of the planned system flushes.

Director Tsao noted that the proposed plan goes until Q1 of 2027 and asked what would happen beyond that time. DD Sombardier responded that the plan is to reevaluate every year and reestablish dates every year. A statement to this effect could be included in the plan.

Director Molinaro asked if the 2-hour time slot for flushes and maintenance was significant. Operations Officer Keith Olson responded that many clients have live animals and 2 hours is the established cutoff as far as ensuring survival of the animals. Director Molinaro also asked if there was a reason that flushes were planned midday as he would have thought morning might be better. Operations Officer Olson responded that for the flushes, midday is when the highest level of pumping is already taking place and therefore is the preferred time for the flushes as the more water circulating the better. Operations Officer Olson also mentioned that high-volume mid-day flushes are the best time to reduce or minimize the electrical demand charge. Maintenance slots are planned for earlier in the morning.

Director Molinaro stated that he thought a waiver is appropriate considering recent actions by clients. He thought that at the very least, an acknowledgement should be necessary.

DD Sombardier asked what happens if some clients refuse to acknowledge or sign a waiver; would the plan still go forward. Director Molinaro felt that it should.

AG Cole pointed out that staff plans to reach out to all tenants and that he recommends everyone sign off on the plan. He explained that a liability waiver might be more difficult to obtain than an acknowledgement.

The waiver might need to get approved at the next Board meeting. DD Sombardier pointed out that the next flush would be May 27 while the next Board meeting is May 19. And that clients are eager to get the plan going.

Director Bruce concurs that clients should acknowledge that they are aware that the flushes will take place. Chair Kalipi also concurred.

Director Tsao stated that his impression is that most tenants want the flushes to happen. He does not think acknowledgment will be a problem.

Chair Kalipi asked if a motion should be made. DD Sombardier responded that it would be helpful for the Board to approve the plan, agree that staff seek input from all tenants, finalize and implement the plan. AG Cole suggested that if major issues are raised regarding the plan or the acknowledgment requirement, the Board could conduct a Special meeting to address these.

**Director Wicker joined the meeting at approximately 1:30PM.**

Chair Kalipi entertained a motion to approve what was described by DD Sombardier. Director Wilshire moved first, and the motion was seconded by Director Tsao. Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved (7-0).

- **Item 5. Financial Report: Approval and Decision Making.**

Chair Kalipi asked DD Sombardier to present this agenda item.

DD Sombardier presented the report that was included in the Board packet. This included a revenue table, an expenditure table, a special fund summary and an arrears summary.

The revenues for July-Feb for FY26 are in line with last year's revenues for the same period, with an overall increase primarily due to increase in seawater usage. Land revenues decreased a little mainly due to a significant decrease in Hale Iako office revenues. At the beginning of FY26 we lost clients for 4 to 5 offices, and these have not yet been leased out again. This is the first time since the early years of renovation in 2017 that there is significant occupancy in Hale Iako.

Expenditures have also increased. This is in part due to increased seawater expenditures. We also saw an increase in administrative expenses, particularly payroll. This increase results from the fact that NELHA is now fully staffed (except for one position) compared to same period last year. A significant portion of the increased payroll is the Executive Director position which started in February 2025.

The special fund has decreased a little from the last financial report in January but is mostly stable at approximately \$700,000.

Arrears include Apparent Inc at approximately \$24,000. This company usually pays the arrears when pushed every 4 months or so. But this time around, the company has been unresponsive. A breach of contract will be sent out. There are two University of Hawaii projects that have significant arrears. The lease extensions on these have finally been executed, and payments are expected soon to bring the accounts current. We have already received a check from SBDC in March that pays down most of the balance but this is not reflected in the arrears since they only include data up to February 2026.

DD Sombardier asked if there were any questions and there were none.

Chair Kalipi asked if a motion was required and DD Sombardier responded that in the past, the Board typically approves the financial presentation. Chair subsequently asked for a motion. Director Wilshire moved first, and the motion was seconded by Director Tsao. Hearing no objections, the motion was approved (8-0).

- **Item 9. Executive Director's Informational Status Report on ongoing projects including: 2026 Legislative session, research campus leases, new leases under discussion; water quality and seawater system maintenance; offshore deep seawater pipe removal planning and design; new potable water supply update; aquaculture accelerator and investment fund initiative; grant applications; new Mauka Research Campus; renewable distributed energy resources initiative for microgrid; and, solar desalination; contracts and agreements including master plan and EIS update.\***

Chair Kalipi asked DD Sombardier to present this agenda item. DD Sombardier presented two items.

The first item was a summary of the Kona storm impacts. She explained that NELHA

experienced some damages from the storm as did much of the State of Hawaii. Access to the park was temporarily impacted when one of 4 large trees at the entrance blocked the road on Friday night. NELHA operations staff was able to restore full access by Saturday early morning. Other damages included wind and water damage in buildings, a shed rooftop blowing off, damages to fences, loss of sea water air conditioning in Hale Iako due to loss of the SWAC system VFD and loss of several sea water system pump VFDs.

DD Sombardier emphasized that NELHA Operations Officer and staff were at the facility throughout the weekend to address first level impacts and that utilities (seawater, power and freshwater remained mostly on through the event). Director Tsao concurred with the assessment that operations staff performed admirably.

Chair Kalipi expressed gratitude to the staff for response to the storm.

The second item was a summary of legislative activities as they relate to NELHA. DD Sombardier stated this was requested by Board members at the January meeting.

NELHA is monitoring 24 measures and has provided testimonies for 5 of these. These include support for establishing a blue cluster and Office of Marine Affairs (SB2907) and construction related bills. The testimony for the special fund sweep (SB2921) explained that NELHA does not have excess special funds as only 1 to 2 months' worth of operating expenses are available in the special fund at any given time. WAM subsequently removed NELHA from the list in the special fund measure.

NELHA also supported the Governor's budget bill in coordination with DBEDT. This bill has passed the house and now needs to pass the senate. The budget bill includes \$10M CIP funds to remove abandoned deep sweater pipelines offshore, \$1.675M to address deferred maintenance including security fencing, campus electrical repairs and upgrades, roadway repairs and pipeline repairs and improvements. These CIP bills are even more important after the Kona storm event. The budget bill also includes approval for one new position (cultural practitioner) to support master plan, EIS work and address deferred stewardship, as well as approval to restore funding for the Admin Assistant, the latter being more of a housekeeping matter which nonetheless requires legislative approval.

- **Item 10. Announcements.**

Chair Kalipi noted that the next meeting is scheduled for May 19, 2026, at 1:00 pm

- **Item 11. Adjournment.**

Chair Kalipi adjourned the meeting at 1:51pm.

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