

April, 2019 Newsletter

President's Message



Notes from PMKCA General Membership Meeting

The Pa'auilo Mauka Kalopa Community Association held its annual General Membership Meeting on January 29. Residents of these mauka communities were invited to attend, hear about neighborhood concerns and to become members of the Association.

Kamehameha Schools Projects

Marissa Harmon of Kamehameha Schools (KS) began her presentation with plans for about 12 thousand acres in our vicinity. In October, some of these acres (approximately 3000) are being transitioned out of trees. Included are two areas near Pa'auilo. About 700 to 800 acres are to be managed by cultural and educational groups developing gardens and other activities. Hui Mau is a cultural partner with KS. Their offices are next to Earl's store and they are developing working gardens both mauka and makai.

Another project involving these 3000 acres will involve cutting the trees in this area, taking up to 5 years for the harvesting to be completed. When the harvest is complete, the land will be used for projects other than timber. Negotiations with companies for the management of all 12,000 acres of timber were ongoing, but no definitive decisions have been made. KS intends to keep about 9,000 acres in rotational forestry.

KS made strategic changes starting in 2015. These changes are aimed at improving native Hawaiian prospects as well as achieving financial gains to support the educational mission of KS. Harmon then noted that a large project will be to convert the Keauhou Beach Hotel area in Kona into a Hawaiian Cultural Center.

Report from Council Member Val Poindexter

Val Poindexter discussed the need to improve WIFI connectivity in the area, especially in Honokaa. Also, roads in our communities are again under scrutiny and there is a plan to survey the roads to establish priorities. It was mentioned that our very capable roads committee had already done this in Pa'auilo and Kalopa. Poindexter indicated that it was

time for another inspection tour of road problems with representatives from the maintenance division of Public Works.

Val has been working with Parks and Recreation and says that there is an overwhelming number of facilities in need of upgrading, unfortunately with far more need than money available. She said that we need to establish more partnerships with volunteer organizations to move some projects along. There are huge budget problems coming up due to the lava flows and volcanic destruction, which only makes park facility repairs more difficult.

Community Policing Report

John Kari, our neighborhood and community police representative, gave a rather positive report for our communities, as crime has receded somewhat in the last year, with no major crimes in the last 6 months. He said that people have been quite helpful in reporting strange cars or people who do not seem to belong in certain areas.

The police department is reorganizing the Hamakua/North Hilo command structure, but they are not changing the number of officers as yet. They are hoping to have a Captain and Lieutenant in each new group when the reorganization is completed with more patrols in the various areas.

Selected Committee Reports

Jami Sales gave the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) report. CERT recently had a joint “rescue” exercise with Laupahoehoe which went very well. Communications radios funded by the county (thank you, Val) should be available in a week or two.

As Utilities Committee chair, Sales also reported that water tests continue to be above standards. She offered to share a map of our area showing the size of all water pipes, plus water tank and hydrant locations. (Note: this report was given before the windstorm effects in our communities.)

Linda Gallano talked about Kalopa Park projects. She described how the canoe garden started as a school project with her students. She thanked all the people who have been contributing time and energy to clearing the trails, cleaning signs, weeding and updating the brochures. Henry Herrera displayed a new sign he had just finished which will identify the beginning of the nature trail. Gallano also bemoaned the vandalism that resulted in the destructive loss of our donation box. She suggested that we need replace the box since visitors appreciate the trail guides provided and often leave a donation. University people have been helping with the eradication of strangler figs in the park

and in updating the technical parts of the trail guides.

Joe gave us an update on the fire ant problem that we thought was under control in our communities. After recent rains, a new infestation was found which was being spread downstream to new neighbors. This is a serious problem that we may all have to deal with.

Jim Millar, captain of the Volunteer Fire Department, submitted a written report. 2018 was one of the lightest call years in memory; there were only a total of 15 calls. Jim suggested that it was a result of the amount of rainfall that occurred last year. The volunteers continue to train twice a month. There currently is an active crew of 6 volunteers consisting of 5 veterans, and one who has just completed the driver CDL training and is now getting his 40 hours of road training with our vehicles. One new recruit has just passed the probationary period and one person is just about to start the probationary period.

Jim noted that with all the rain that we had last year we now have a huge fuel load. With the El Nino weather pattern predicted, vegetation could dry out and we may face an intense fire season. Jim urges our residents to be aware of fire risk and be careful.

Jim reminded us that it is illegal to have any kind of outdoor fire, unless you have an agricultural permit to do so, issued through the Health Department, have checked with the department to see if it is a no-burn day and have also called the fire department to let them know you are going to burn.

Cooking fires, ie. imu fires and barbecue type fires are often mistaken for wildfires. We realize that everyone used to burn all the time but with all the new people moving here there are many calls that come through 911 for smell of smoke or smoke sighted. Fire departments are called out to these “unauthorized controlled burns”. The fires are extinguished and the party is made aware of the rules. This is a waste of time and resources for firefighters.

Next PMKCA Meetings

The next quarterly meeting of the PMKCA board of directors is scheduled for 7 pm, Thursday, April, 11th, 2019, at the Hawaiian Vanilla Company. At this meeting, we'll firm up plans for our annual General Membership meeting and Picnic to be held at the Kalopa State Park on July 27th. The general meeting will include updates from invited elected officials and others on issues affecting our membership area and the larger Hāmākua coast. Also to be approved and voted upon will be bylaws changes needed to reorganize our standing committees.

You don't need to be a board member or committee chairman to attend this next board meeting. It's open to all members and we welcome participation and contribution by everyone. Members of the public are also very welcome to attend our meetings.