

# WEST MAUI TAXPAYERS VOICE

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## *President's Message* **Hurricanes, A Departure and the Need for Support**

**Aloha Dear Friends:**

As I write this letter, we are still feeling the after effects of Hurricane Katrina in Maui. It compels us to pause, pray, and listen for guidance. Hawaii is no stranger to hurricanes and we believe that there must be a way for us to look at the opportunities and challenges to be learned from this disaster.

As we look at the overall situation we are faced with in West Maui, we can see similarities between ourselves and the Gulf States which are compounded by our isolation from essential services for health and safety.



We have asked our local civil defense department to brief our community on what we can do to improve our resources for emergency shelters and supplies in the event of an emergency. We will be reporting on this on our web site, [www.westmaui.org](http://www.westmaui.org).

Some good news in this newsletter is the recent appointment of our Executive Director, Ezekiel "Zeke" Kalua, joining the Maui Mayor's office as an assistant to the Mayor. We believe the county is fortunate to have Zeke bring his many

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Welcome to our new look. This new design symbolizes our continuing desire to serve you and our community even better. Even with the modern look we are pleased to report that it is being produced at lower cost than previous editions.



## **OUR ZEKE JOINS MAYOR ARAKAWA AS EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT**

WMTA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EZEKIELA "ZEKE" KALUA BIDS farewell to the West Maui Taxpayers Association (WMTA) but not to the West Maui Community. After serving WMTA for more than four years, Zeke has taken a position with the County of Maui as Executive Assistant to Mayor Alan Arakawa representing the West Side.

"I think that Zeke's familiarity with the West Side and his employment with WMTA, his work on issues through the organization and also his participation on various committees and most recently his representation on the Governor's Advisory Committee are key to his being well versed on issues and and public opinion," stated an enthusiastic Jo Anne Johnson, Councilwoman for the West Side.

"Having a firm grasp on the problems that are being brought forward by the community will enable Zeke to communicate those concerns to the administration," she added. "This will result in a more timely resolution of problems or at least a response to the community."

As an effective advocate for the community, Zeke has tactfully developed his very own successful method of operation, 'Foot to 'Okole.' Zeke stated "foot to 'okole since 2000

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*Working for a better Lahaina, Ka'anapali, Hnokowai, Kapalua, Napili, Laniopoko, Olowalu and all points in between*

### *Presidents Letter (continued)*

talents and dedication to “service above self” to the County administration. Our new Executive Director, Mahealani Strong, has some big challenges; however, both Zeke and I feel she is capable of continuing our progress and success.

Our WMTA Board is blessed with some very talented volunteers who are working diligently on your behalf. Your board of directors needs your vocal and financial support. Please note that our ability to make positive changes is directly proportional to our financial resources to support our lobbying efforts. Holding community meetings and marketing consistent with this lobbying effort requires financial support. Dues alone are not sufficient to meet the challenges ahead of us with the ammunition we require.

Please consider making an added donation to WMTA and sending it to us using the enclosed return envelope. We are working hard to earn your continued trust and confidence. We humbly suggest that it is one of the best investments you can make to ensure continued attention to sorely needed improvements in West Maui.

### *Zeke Appointed from page 1*

and I hope to keep putting “foot to ‘okole for the people in my new position.

President Pluta relayed his congratulations and praises to Zeke for his many accomplishments at WMTA. I believe Zeke will be able to assist the Mayor in prioritizing the administration’s resources in response to West Maui needs,” Pluta said. “This is a beneficial move for Zeke and West Maui at the same time, Pluta noted. Zeke’s accomplishments included increasing membership; bridging communication gaps between elected officials, the Government, and West Maui residents; establishing a partnership with resident kupuna; working toward mutual goals like the reality of the Lahaina Senior Center; and effective presentation of WMTA goals and objectives. Both WMTA and WMIF offer profound thanks for the length, depth and strength of Eziekiela Kalua’s valuable service.

### *Zeke Says Farewell*

LEAVING THE WMTA was probably one of the hardest decisions that I have ever had to make since my return to Hawaii in the year 2000.

A harder decision than that has been finding a credible, sensitive, reliable person in the community to keep the momentum of the WMTA going forward.

Representing the West Maui Community as “One United Voice” requires a person willing to work hard and dedicate their life to the community that they live, work and play in.

In choosing Mahealani Strong, I feel confident that the duties and responsibilities I charge her with in my stead are promises I know will be fulfilled.

I would like to thank the West Maui Community for allowing me the opportunity to serve you and be a part of you for as long as I have.

In closing, I ask that you continue to support the WMTA with Mahealani Strong as your new Executive Director.

**Malama Pono A Me Mahalo West Maui,**

**Zeke**

### *NEW 2006 Maui County Property Tax Rates*

#### *Class (Net Taxable Land & Building per \$1,000)*

<b>Time Share</b>	<b>\$14.00</b>
<b>Improved Residential</b>	<b>\$ 5.86</b>
<b>Apartment</b>	<b>\$ 5.86</b>
<b>Commercial</b>	<b>\$ 6.75</b>
<b>Industrial</b>	<b>\$ 6.75</b>
<b>Agricultural</b>	<b>\$ 4.93</b>
<b>Conservation</b>	<b>\$ 4.93</b>
<b>Hotel &amp; Resort</b>	<b>\$ 8.30</b>
<b>Unimproved Residential</b>	<b>\$ 5.86</b>
<b>Homeowner</b>	<b>\$ 3.50</b>

## **MEET MAHEALANI STRONG**

I am humbled by the privilege and honored to serve my community where my family has made a home, here in West Maui. I was born on the island of O'ahu and raised in Maui County. I spent my elementary years in Kailua, O'ahu and Pukalani, Maui. The majority of my intermediate and high school years were spent in Kawela, Moloka'i; finally graduating at Kaua'i High School. (You could say my family "hopped" around).

After a short time at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, I left Hawaii in 1996 to further my education in Washington State. I married in 1999 and, three children later, I found myself missing home. Wonders of raising my children in Hawaii became reality when my husband and I responded to the opportunity to pioneer a church on Maui in 2002.

We packed up our children and headed home. Upon arrival, I took a position with WMTA. Using my previous accounting experience gained while employed with Washington Mutual Bank for more than four years, I became an aide to the Executive Director WMTA.

## **CAN WEST MAUI COPE WITH A DISASTER?**

By Louise Rockett, Lahaina News.

**IS WEST MAUI PREPARED TO MEET THE CHALLENGE** of an Inika-type storm, the destructive, category force four hurricane that battered Kauai in 1991?

"Our remoteness isolation on a dead end cul-de-sac, with multi-billion dollars and over 50,000 people isolated, may be an example of the worst planning in the United States today. It is getting worse daily with more people, more buildings and no hospital, no emergency shelter improvements,

**Aloha West Maui**  
**from the new Executive Director**

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I believe in the efforts of the West Maui Taxpayers Association and its arm, the West Maui Improvement Foundation. With the realization of the many resolved issues as proof to our theme, "Together we can make a difference," I find nothing is impossible to those who believe.

Greater things than these can be expected for the years to come. I urge you to call, write, and even visit with me at my office here in Lahaina town to discuss any issue you see unresolved or unaddressed. I have accepted the charge given to me by the Former Executive Director, Ezekiel "Zeke" Kalua, to maintain and increase the momentum of the passion behind the Voice of the West Maui Community. Together we will not only be heard, we will be answered.

In your service,

Mahealani K. K. Strong

Executive Director, WMTA

no road access alternatives and no sensibility in understanding any of that," said Joe Pluta, the frustrated president of the West Maui Taxpayers Association.

In the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita West Maui residents are taking a look at how dangerous our isolation from urgently needed emergency shelters and Hospital Services are.

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**COPING WITH DISASTER** from page 3

Dr. Charles “Chip” Fletcher is a professor at the University of Hawaii’s Geology and Geophysics School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology and author of the Coastal Erosion Management Plan for the State of Hawaii.

His opinion on the condition of the unstable, two-lane access road in and out of West Maui is pessimistic.

“Even with today’s south swell (Sept. 15), the Honoapilani Highway took a beating and is covered with sand and cobble in places. It would not take much to rip out huge sections of the road and totally isolate the West Maui community from road access.

“If you took a direct hit from an Iniki-type storm,” Dr. Fletcher predicted, “the road would be completely inundated for large segments; the coastal plain which is so flat could be flooded across its width to the base of the West Maui Mountains. When the water recedes, the highway would essentially be gone, and the shoreline would be repositioned landward, a variable distance from a few yards to a quarter-mile or more.

“The West Maui community would be isolated and the entire population would highway would only receive assistance via the Kapalua Airport or the Lahaina Harbor,” he added.

**West Maui Taxpayers Association is supporting a plan to improve the Lahaina Civic Center for use as an emergency shelter estimated to cost \$2.2 million. Please support our position to make this necessary improvement.**

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Fletcher further cautioned, “If a hurricane were to bear down on Hawaii and look like it would turn into West Maui waters, there would be little time to order an evacuation unless the storm tracked that direction from far offshore.

“West Maui’s isolation is so serious that it is actually a potential disaster that has been miraculously avoided so far, but the odds are against us. It’s getting worse fast,” Pluta remarked.

West Side County Councilwoman Jo Anne Johnson voiced her concern about the county evacuation plan. “I do not believe this plan is as comprehensive as it should be and certainly does nothing for all of the people.

According to Allan Delima, plans and operations officer for Maui County Civil Defense, all three West Side shelters are located at the top of Lahainaluna Road at Princess Nahienaena Elementary School, Lahaina Intermediate School and Lahainaluna High School.

“It has already been admitted,” Delima noted, “there is not enough shelter space to take care of our population. It is not unique to Maui County; it is in every single county in the state. Ideally, we would like to have shelter space to accommodate the entire population.”

Emergency supplies are stored next to the Lahaina Fire Station. Bill and Marie Weber are the “caretakers” of the container.

Project Impact got money for the container, which was set up fully equipped with about 100 cots and blankets, water and a generator, Bill Weber reported.

“There is no food, because it gets much too hot in there,” he added. (Reprinted with permission).

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**SUPPORT THE NEEDS OF WEST MAUI**

**BY MAKING A CONTRIBUTION TO WMTA**

# West Maui Taxpayers Association

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## ***HELP US HELP WEST MAUI***

### ***ADD YOUR VOICE: JOIN, DONATE OR RENEW TODAY***

If you haven't the time or inclination to be an activist on behalf of the things you think need improving on West Maui, you can still do your part by joining WMTA.

Your annual contribution helps fund the vital work we do in West Maui. Please send your membership dues and/or donation in the mail today! Use a check or provide credit card information. Dues are \$50 a year but any amount will be accepted.

**Please provide the following contact information:**

*(this information will not be sold to other individuals or businesses)*

**Full Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **(if credit card, name of cardholder)**

**Title** \_\_\_\_\_ **Company** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip Code** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fax** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Credit card number (optional)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Expiration Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **By check (optional)** \_\_\_\_\_

**AMOUNT:** \_\_\_\_\_ **If credit card, signature as it appears on card:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you belong to a condominium Association? If so, which Association do you belong to?**

**No** \_\_\_\_\_ **Yes** \_\_\_\_\_ **Name of Association** \_\_\_\_\_



## **WMTA Short Term 2005-2006 Goals and Objectives**

### **Health and Safety**

- Support development of a West Maui 24-Hour Acute Care Facility for Emergency Medical Services.
- Support retrofit of the Lahaina Civic Center as an Emergency Shelter.

### **Traffic and Roadways**

- Monitor and expedite the progress and construction of the Lahaina Bypass Phase 1, from Ikena St. to Lahainaluna Road to Keawe St. across from the Lahaina Cannery Shopping Center.
- Support the purchase of lands from the Pali to Puamana for relocation of Honoapiilani Highway to solve erosion problems and create four lanes.
- Expedite funding and construction of Lower Honoapiilani Road Phase IV & V, improvements from Hoohui St. in Kahana to Office Road in Kapalua.
- Monitor conditions of County roadways in West Maui, to better implement the preventative maintenance programs. This program services areas where potholes are present or other repairs such as sinking sidewalks and common walking areas maintained by the County Department of Transportation.
- Monitor and expedite the progress of the Lahaina and Mala Pier improvements. These improvements although not designed yet, are for new comfort stations and pier additions to relieve current congestion at both piers.
- Road shoulder improvements and maintenance to Pali area of Honoapiilani Hwy, as needed after heavy rains.
- Emergency Response Team Implementation opening roadways. Lahaina Towne Parking is currently experiencing a critical shortage. The WMTA suggests the following:
  - a. Off-site parking/tram to Front Street.
  - b. Sugar Cane train may be used for commuter purposes from Kaanapali to Lahaina.

### **Taxes and Budget**

- Continue to work with the proposed Maui County Budget to create relief for residents:
  - a. Greater homeowner exemptions.
  - b. Consideration of similar proposal to Proposition 13 for Maui County.
  - c. Setting value caps on homes to keep affordable prices and rates.
- Maintain regular communication with County and State officials with regular meetings involving key department heads, Council members and Legislature, Parks and Recreation.
- Replace playground equipment at Honokowai Beach Park.
- Advocate Public/Private Partnerships for additions of parks equipment and playground improvements.

### **Work in Progress**

- Support the establishment of affordable housing in West Maui to ensure it is built in a timely fashion taking into consideration safety first and foremost.
- Support the establishment of much needed infrastructure improvements at Lahainaluna High School.

### **Long-term Goals**

Visit [westmaui.org](http://westmaui.org) for a review of long-term goals on traffic and roadways

*Please be reminded that the WMTA web site at [www.westmaui.org](http://www.westmaui.org) is a wonderful source of information and is constantly updated with important announcements. Please make a note to visit this site often.*