

WEST MAUI TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION

Advocating For You!



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A'ohe Hana Nui Ke Alu 'ia (No task is too large when we work together)

THE VOICE

NEWSLETTER OF THE WEST MAUI TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION – FEB 2017

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE



Another very busy successful year is upon us and we at the West Maui Taxpayers' Association expect 2017 to be as busy and active as we continue to advocate our goals and objectives for a better West Maui.

On January 12, 2017, we held our Annual Meeting at the Lahaina Civic Center (click here to watch it on Akaku <https://vimeo.com/203034385>) Thank you to all who attended our Annual Meeting and all of the presenters; *Hawaii Hazards Awareness and Resilience Program, Kahoma Village, Kaanapali Golf Course Hawaii ERS Re-Design and Development Department of Transportation, Maui Metropolitan Planning*

Organization, Tax Foundation of Hawaii and Maui Nui Marine Resources Council. The information you shared with us and those who were in attendance were very helpful. Your projects and activities will impact the lives of many people, not only on West Maui but the entire County of Maui. With this in mind, we hope that you continue to provide us with project updates. Of course, if WMTA can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to call on us.

WMTA will continue to do its best to help improve our lives here in Lahaina. However, to do even better than what we've accomplished to date, we will need a lot of assistance both with your time and funds to maintain and carry on our goals and objectives.

On February 12, 2017, WMTA will have its Whale Watch Fundraiser. Funds from this event will help to support WMTA's operations for 2017. For more information, please visit our website at www.westmaui.org.

Thank you for your continued support and your confidence for the West Maui Taxpayers Association.

Aloha,

President. WMTA

MHLA CHARITY WALK - WEST MAUI SKATEPARK

Join West Maui Improvement Foundation (WMIF) and West Maui Taxpayer Association (WMTA) in our latest community project! We are raising funds for the West Maui Skate Park to enhance safety and maintenance. Our plan includes getting web cameras for security, and adding additional artwork.

Our fundraising goal for this project is \$4,000. These funds will go towards the purchase of the security web cameras and site enhancements.

Last year, in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Club, and the County of Maui Department of Parks and Recreation, Rotary Club of Lahaina, WMIF and WMTA Artist Ken Nishimura of Keep It Flowing Media has painted the imagery on the tables and chairs at the skate park, collaborating with the Boys and Girls Club youths (Lahaina) throughout the process.

Please review Keep it Flowing Media's post documenting the entire process at the skate park:

<http://keepitflowingmedia.com/portfolio-item/lahaina-skate-park-project/>

Together, we can make a difference! Thank you to everyone who has played a part in beautifying the West Maui Skatepark and making it a safer place for our keiki ~ we're not done yet and invite you to help reach all our goals. Contact Joe Pluta to find out how you can help, or make a donation today! Make your tax deductible donation to WMIF to support this project today, and memo the check "Skate Park."

WMTA ANNOUNCES SPECIAL SPEAKERS COMING TO PARTICIPATE IN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

West Maui Community Disaster Planning Meetings Scheduled for February 16, 2017 at Lahaina Civic Center Social Hall at 5:30 p.m.

Doug Bausch is the Science Advisor for the Pacific Disaster Center. Mr. Bausch has expertise in impact assessment and loss modeling for natural hazards and while at FEMA from 2001 to 2015, provided impact analytics for all Level 1 U.S. disasters.

Andrea Chatman is a Disaster Management Applications Analyst for the Pacific Disaster Center. Ms. Chatman has over fifteen years of experience in the field of disaster support and a Master's Degree in Disaster Science. She is also a member of the South Maui CERT team.

The WMTA is working with the Maui Emergency Management Agency, formally called Maui Civil Defense, The Pacific Disaster Center, and the State Department of Emergency Management on developing a customized disaster plan designed to meet West Maui's specific needs. The isolation from the Islands major hospital and the major airport due to frequent road closures, fires and flooding have highlighted the need for special preparedness planning.

The West Maui Taxpayers Association invites you to join us and be a part of the solution to plans that may well be the reason why lives will be saved when disasters strike. Come and Join us!

February 16th meeting will be Module One of a series of monthly workshops presented by subject-matter experts, the Hawaiian Hazards and Resilience Program (HHARP), and will provide education and outreach that promotes hazard understanding, and will offer tools and information resources to guide mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery planning for the community.

The schedule follows:

- **February 16 5:30-8:00 p.m. Lahaina Civic Center - Social Hall**
- March 16 5:30-8:00 p.m. Lahaina Civic Center - Amphitheater
- April 20 5:30-8:00 p.m. Lahaina Civic Center - Amphitheater
- May 18 5:30-8:00 p.m. Lahaina Civic Center - Amphitheater

These meetings are free and open to the public. Our community is diverse and we need everyone's participation to develop community plans. More Information on WMTA and Disaster Preparedness can be found at www.westmaui.org Please put these meetings on your calendar and plan to attend!

TAX INCREASES ARE ON THE HORIZON- YES--YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST! – By Joseph D Pluta

WMTA EXPECTS TAX INCREASES IN GENERAL EXCISE TAXES AS WELL AS PROPERTY TAXES FOR MAUI TO MEET EXTRAORDINARY DEMANDS PRIMARILY DUE TO UNFUNDED TAX LIABILITIES FOR STATE AND COUNTY PUBLIC EMPLOYEES. –EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEM, (ERS).

At the WMTA, we have been aware of the State and County demands to prudently fund their obligations to their Employee Pension and Benefit Programs. We have also been concerned that there seemed to be a total unwillingness to set in place not only the proper funding mechanisms to adjust to this liability, but necessary modifications to bring about necessary changes and adjustments to these retirement benefit programs.

Let there be no mistake, there is going to be a day of reckoning that will be here before you know it. This issue was recently discussed in articles by Dave Segal in the Star Advertiser Newspaper in their January 10th, 2017 Hawaii News entitled: “Hawaii public employee pension fund shortfall tops \$12 Billion.”

Tom Yamachika, President of the Tax Foundation of Hawaii, came and spoke at the WMTA annual meeting on January 12th, 2017. He recently wrote an insightful article entitled “Unfunded Pensions-Tip of the Iceberg?” See our web site for the full article reposted at www.westmaui.org.

Mike White, Chairman of the County Council of Maui also spoke at our WMTA annual meeting. He is concerned about how the County of Maui is going to meet it's obligations to the ERS funding. Both the State and the Counties pay into the Employee Retirement System, (ERS)

Mike was straightforward that this coming budget session was going to be extremely challenging. No one is looking forward to it and no area is above scrutinizing. (We have learned that all County departments are being instructed to cut their existing budgets everywhere.)

We predict that the County of Maui will be proposing the implementation of their ability to add .5% to the State GET that can be returned to them, which mechanism came into existence primarily to fund Rail in Honolulu and by the law as written be allowed to be extended to all the Neighbor Islands as well. That option was not previously exercised by Maui County, but it's our assumption that it will this coming budget session. Not only that, but increased in Real Property Taxes, (RPT), as well. Even though this is not an election year, we expect that the battle plan on RPT will be to pass the highest burden to the non-voting property owners in the transient rental and vacation club or time sharing industry.

The WMTA has always advocated for fairness in taxes and will be standing by to study and comment on the expected tax increase mechanisms. I can tell you that we will need all the resources we have at our disposal and more to mitigate these extraordinary tax increases. You can help us help you in this coming budget battle with your time, talent and money. LET US HEAR FROM YOU! Any Actuaries out there? How impactful we can be is directly tied to our resources and they currently are woefully inadequate. Send in your donations today!



Photos from Left: Tom Yamachika with Joe Pluta and Mike White at the WMTA Annual Meeting

CALL TO ACTION – A REPORT BY JOSEPH PLUTA, V.P./TREASURER, WMTA

As reported by President Rick Nava, the recent WMTA Annual Meeting on January 12, 2017 was very well attended with over 200 Maui residents and some of which became new members of WMTA. AKAKU re-broadcasting this meeting’s special community presentations is a huge plus for all concerned. Here is a “perpetual archive link” from AKAKU <https://vimeo.com/203034385> for this meeting and it will be posted on our Web site at www.westmaui.org

Like every organization, the WMTA has a fundamental framework of a Community Non-Profit Organization which incorporated with Articles and Bylaws and has been operating for the past 39 years in accordance with that framework. Our “Members” are adult individuals who are interested in West Maui and most have an investment in property or business on the West side. Our “memberships” have swelled when we were championing a “cause,” which was historically having to do with the quality of life and health and safety concerns unique to our isolation on single highway cul-de-sac. Defined as “a street, lane, etc., closed at one end; blind alley; dead-end street.” We are still very much involved with vital issues impacting our community, health and safety, ocean erosion, traffic and roadways, beach and reef health, affordable housing, and homelessness.

It has been suggested to our Board that “memberships” in organizations is “old school,” and “Causes” and “Movements,” are what is Trending as the New Way to go when seeking financial support for worthy causes. We know that No other community non-profit organization anywhere in the entire State of Hawaii can boast the bonafide track record of successes and accomplishments for the benefits for it’s members in community “causes” that the team of WMTA and WMIF. They said it was impossible to raise the funds and receive necessary support to build our own Fire and Ambulance Station, yet we did just that at the Napili Fire and Ambulance Station. They said it was impossible to get a Certificate of Need for a Hospital in West Maui, and we did that too. Our work is unparalleled and unmatched anywhere and our “causes” still remain a concern worthy of your financial support.

Simply stated, there is not any better investment for your quality of life in West Maui than the WMTA and WMIF! We are synergistically partnering our efforts in a mutually beneficial campaign for Administrative Professional assistance and raising funds to once again retain an Executive Director. Your volunteer board members are doing the best they can and know how much more effective we can be working for you with a full-time E.D. once again. We have a target goal of \$65K to meet and ask you to make an investment in West Maui’s future success by a tax-deductible donation payable to the West Maui Improvement Foundation Inc. (WMIF), today. Memo your donation “WMTA-2017.” Mahalo!

West Maui Taxpayers Association
MEMBERSHIP FORM - IRS EIN 99-0160368 - NON PROFIT 501C (4)
 You can also pay online at www.westmaui.org/joinnow.html

Member Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ ST: _____ Zip: _____

Day Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Check here to have your name kept private in publications and acknowledgements.
 Check here to have your e-mail address added to our “WMTA E-Alerts” List

<p>\$ _____ MEMBERSHIP</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am a member and renewing my dues</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am not a member but would like to join</p>	<p>Membership Levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Community Supporter \$25/year <input type="radio"/> Community Leader \$50.00/year <input type="radio"/> Families \$100/year <input type="radio"/> Businesses \$100/year <input type="radio"/> AOAO – email wmta@maui.net
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\$ _____ ADDITIONAL DONATION WMTA is a 501-c-4 Non Profit Organization. "Contributions to civic leagues or other section 501(c)(4) organizations generally are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. They may be deductible as trade or business expenses, if ordinary and necessary in the conduct of the taxpayer's business." (Source: IRS.Gov). Please check with your tax adviser.

Memberships effective for one year upon receipt of membership dues payment.
Mail Checks, payable to “West Maui Taxpayers Association”, to:
 West Maui Taxpayers Association PO Box 158 • Lahaina, HI 96761

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 Newsletter of the
 West Maui Taxpayers Association
FEB 2017

*“Bringing the West Maui
 Community Together,
 Advocating for You”*
 A 501-C-4 Community Organization

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Look for us on

 and  Twitter
 (www.WestMaui.org has links)