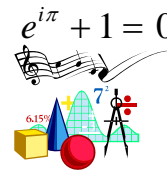
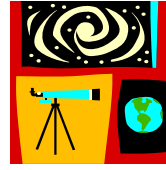


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The most formidable weapon against errors of any kind is reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall.

-Thomas Paine

Monday, June 23, 2008

Mayor Charmaine Tavares
County of Maui Building; 9th floor
200 South High Street
Wailuku, HI 96768

Subject: Ocean Safety – A Unique Opportunity to Move to Public Safety **Now**

Dear Mayor Tavares,

I have recently resigned after working for two years as Recreation Specialist for Pools and TA Chief of Aquatics under Maui County Parks & Recreation Director Tamara Horcajo. I see a unique opportunity that will not be matched or improved with time for you to lead the move of Ocean Safety to under the oversight of the Public Safety Commission (i.e.; become a Division of the Fire Dept.). I sent the attached letter to Director Horcajo and others earlier this month detailing the Public Safety, economic and other reasons for the move – now. This move should be driven by what's best for the citizens and visitors to Maui County's beaches, not what's best for department pride, neither used as a showcase for Parks, nor to reward any employee.

More practically and positively, Maui Visitors Bureau, *The Maui News*, and inquiries with Aquatics often ask why we can't have more lifeguards at our beaches. Many are concerned about our visitors as it affects tourism, but this is just as important a concern for our residents – Maui County is currently limited as long as Ocean Safety is part of Parks & Recreation to County Beach Parks *and* we overlap some Ocean Rescue operations in Fire and Parks. In these and in the expected coming fiscally strapped times, it makes economic sense saving money in reorganization, protecting our tax dollars from lawsuits, and providing support for the tourism industry.

Ocean Safety has changed and become more professional since you oversaw Pool & Ocean Lifeguards during your tenure as Director of Parks & Recreation over a decade ago (ending in 1995). Ocean Safety has become a USLA certified agency which includes being First Responders – not swim instructors. Ocean Safety Officers are Professional Aquatic Rescue Personnel – not coaches, referees, maintenance nor facility managers. Archie Kalepa, The Ocean Safety Supervisor for approximately 10 years, has been effectively gagged by Parks & Aquatics management who have little or no experience in Ocean Safety or Public Safety against speaking publicly about his best professional opinion for the need to move Ocean Safety out of Parks and under the direction of the Public Safety Commission (with Fire) ASAP. The new Fire Chief says he supports the move and is waiting for Director Horcajo to approach them, but unlike me is politically savvy enough to not push publicly.

Nationwide (see attached website prints or click on these links as a few examples: [Honolulu, HI](#); [County of Kauai, HI](#); Hawaii County, [Santa Cruz, CA](#) – click on Fire Dept & Marine Safety; [Pismo Beach, CA](#); [Oceanside, CA](#); [Atlantic Beach, FL](#); [Orange County, CA](#); [Newport Beach, CA](#); [Miami-Dade, FL](#); [Fort Lauderdale, FL](#); [Kitty Hawk, NC](#); [Los Angeles County, CA](#); [Imperial Beach, CA](#)...), Ocean Safety has become part of Public Safety (EMS or Fire) as they've grown and become First Responder Professionals. This topic was specifically addressed at both the recent USLA and Hawaii State Lifeguarding conferences: Every single representative from Fire and Ocean Safety said it was right and better served everyone – citizens, visitors, employees and departments. In one of the discussions on and about Kauai at the USLA conference, the Kauai Visitors Bureau reported how they realized they were losing significant numbers of visitors because of their unguarded (non-Parks) beaches.

You may hear they're not ready (although when I asked and suggested Director Horcajo should at least talk to the new Fire Chief about this, I never heard specifics as to why). Parks & Recreation is not the place to improve Public Safety standards, rescue personnel, and 911 first responders. In short, Ocean Safety's mission and methods are those of First Responders working in Public Safety positions, not Parks nor Recreation coaches, recreation organizers, maintenance personnel nor facility managers. It makes economic and public safety sense to initiate the move now and let the new Chief of Aquatics focus on learning about Pools and Pool Programs.

Since my letter, Parks and Aquatics have moved ahead with a new vigor on a reorganization fit to Parks and the new Chief of Aquatics, not Public Safety. Director Horcajo has not contacted Fire to engage in discussions. The new Aquatics Chief has almost ignored our pools while spending inordinate amounts of time at the Ocean Safety towers selling herself and parks against this move and OSO Supervisor Kalepa despite having seen the arguments for this move. The Aquatics Chief has ignored questions or comments by both the new Fire Chief when reviewing shared operations last month, and ignored direct questions by the USLA Pacific Region rep and Honolulu Ocean Safety Supr Ralph Goto at a recent conference on Oahu.

Please. Before Maui County becomes a backwater and laughing stock in the world of Ocean Safety; before we waste money and time grasping for whatever reason to keep Ocean Safety in Parks; before another person gets hurt at county beaches (not just county beach parks); before we lose an opportunity to truly support the new Fire Chiefs' plan to move forward with his 18-month goal – Please. I hope you find the time to review the attached letter sent to Parks & Recreation and move forward before a unique opportunity is lost. The time to start this move is now.

Aloha

Malcolm Cooper

cc: Tamara Horcajo, Director of Parks & Recreation; Zach Helm, Deputy Director of Parks & Recreation
Archie Kalepa, Ocean Safety Supervisor; Councilman Mike Victorino; Chief of Aquatics Mary Kielty
Marian Feenstra, Stan Zitnic, & Helene Kau, Exec. Asst's to the Mayor; Stan and Marian previous Aquatics
personnel and Stan Risk Mgmt.
Chief Jeff Murray, Maui County Fire Chief and Chief Elvin Komoku
Dain Kane; Ralph Goto (USLA Pacific Region & Honolulu OS Supr), Keala Watson (EMS Honolulu)
Risk Management: Deborah Teves, SeaRay Beltran; Corporation Counsel Jeff Ueoka
Maui News; Honolulu Advertiser, Maui Visitors Bureau
Public Safety Commission