MINUTES

WATER BOARD PUBLIC HEARING ON THE
PROPOSED NEW COST OF POWER ADJUSTMENT CLAUSE

September 22, 2026

West Hawai‘i Civic Center, Bldg. G, 74-5044 Ane Keohokālole Hwy, Kailua-Kona, Hawai‘i

PRESENT:
Mr. Michael Kekela Jr., Chairperson, Dist. 4
Mr. Colin Miura, Water Board Member, Dist. 1
Mr. James Lee, Water Board Member, Dist. 2
Mr. Guy Alameda, Water Board Member, Dist. 3
Mr. Nicholas Riznyk, Water Board Member, Dist. 7 (joined at 9:49 a.m.)
Mr. Keith K. Okamoto, Manager-Chief Engineer,
Department of Water Supply (ex-officio member)

ABSENT:
Mr. Keith Unger, Vice-Chairperson, Dist. 6
Ms. Emily Taaroa, Water Board Member, Dist. 5
Mr. Stephen Lopez, Water Board Member, Dist. 8
Mr. Philip Aiona, Water Board Member, Dist. 9
Director, Planning Department (ex-officio member)
Director, Department of Public Works (ex-officio member)

OTHERS PRESENT:
Ms. Jean Campbell, Deputy Corporation Counsel
Ms. Tiffany DeMasters, Big Island Now, guest
Ms. Josephine Keliipio, guest
Mr. Jeff Bray, guest

DEPARTMENT OF WATER SUPPLY STAFF:

Mr. Alvin Inouye, Water Operations Superintendent
Ms. Shari Uyeno, Assistant Engineering Division Head
Ms. Candace Gray, Waterworks Controller
Mr. Eric Takamoto, Mechanical Engineer III
Ms. Gwen Kimura, Human Resources Specialist I
Mr. Neal Sako, Cartographic Drafting Technician III
Ms. Maraea Keamo, Senior Clerk Stenographer
Ms. Kayla Okazaki, Information Systems Analyst I
Mr. Barry Kobayashi, Information Systems Support Technician II

(Chairperson Kekela called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m.)

CHR. KEKELA: Good morning. Will the public hearing of the Water Board on the proposed new cost of Power Adjustment Clause please come to order? My name is Pono Kekela, Chairperson for the Hawai‘i County Water Board, and I’d like to have the Secretary take a roll call for who is in attendance from the Board.

(A roll call was taken for Water Board Members in attendance. Four Board Members were present: Messrs. Miura, Lee, Alameda, and Chairperson Kekela.)

CHR. KEKELA: Thank you. Notice of the public hearing was published in the Hawai‘i Tribune-Herald and in the West Hawai‘i Today on September 1, 2026.

The Department of Water Supply is operated and controlled by this Water Board as provided by the Hawai‘i County Charter. Section 63 of Part III, Chapter 54, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes, reads as follows:

> "The Board of Water Supply may fix and adjust rates and charges for the furnishing of water and for water services so that the revenues derived therefrom shall be sufficient to make the waterworks and water systems self-supporting and to meet all expenditures authorized by this part; the Board may establish variable rates among the several districts of the County, or among the areas served by the individual water systems within the County, for the purpose of establishing charges as closely as possible to the necessary amount required for the maintenance and operation of the particular individual water systems; provided no rates and charges shall be fixed or adjusted prior to the holding by the Board of a public hearing, public notice of which shall have been given not less than twenty days before the date set for the hearing. The notice shall state the time and place for the hearing and the proposed rates and charges to be considered thereat. The time within which the notice shall be given shall be computed by including the first day (the day of notice) and excluding the last day."

We are here to receive comments or testimony on the proposed amendment to the Power Cost Charge. The Department recommends increasing the Power Cost Charge from $2.53 to $3.04 per thousand gallons to reflect the excess of power costs paid by the Department since the last Power Cost Charge rate was determined.

As stated in the hearing notice, all comments or testimony were to be filed in writing before the time of the hearing or register to have testimony included via web conference application. We would like to follow this format as closely as possible; however, because there may be some of you who do not have any written statements but would like to testify or comment, we would like to afford you this opportunity to do so, but would like to limit such presentations to three minutes because of the time limit.

The hearing is now open for comments from the floor. Maraea, is there anyone registered to provide oral testimony, or is there any written testimony?

(Board Member Riznyk joined at 9:49 a.m.)

MS. KEAMO: There is one.

CHR. KEKELA: ‘Anakē, if you would like to come up and take a seat next to the Manager-Chief Engineer, Mr. Okamoto. Please introduce yourself and where you live, and you have three minutes to share.

MS. KELIIPIO: He said three minutes, but in your instructions it said five minutes; is it three minutes?

MR. OKAMOTO: Yes.

CHR. KEKELA: Whenever you're ready.

MS. KELIIPIO: My name is Josephine Keliipio, I'm from Kailua-Kona and have lived here for four decades, but I'm originally from the Hilo side. I showed up here because I was very curious as to your public hearing because it said that the public hearing was only 15 minutes; that's the first time I've ever been to a 15-minute public hearing. So I got very curious and decided to come and voice my opposition to the rate change as a resident of this county for many years; a resident and taxpayer. I don't know; I don't see anyone from the public here except you guys; you look like staff. I got very concerned as to how many

people do show up for your public hearings when you do hold them, and why don't they show up for them? Because that's the feeling I'm getting from being here. And so that's why I came, because it concerns me that when I went to your website, I didn't see any kind of blaring announcement on it saying, "Hey, we're raising your rates. Show up for this public hearing today". Zero. Nothing. So, are you doing enough to inform us? I don't think so.

Anyway, that's why I came to express my opposition to the rate change. You know, all of us locals are struggling; whether we're working or not, we're still struggling. And you know what's a real turn-off is when you turn around and a lot of locals are leaving Hawai'i, right? 20,000 people have left in the last four years or so, moved away, and a lot of transplants are moving in, squeezing us out, and there was even a big article, a huge article, about all the millionaires that are moving to this island. That should startle all of us. They're the ones that can maybe pay for all your higher rates, but I don't think the locals can, so that's why I'm speaking out. Thank you.

CHR. KEKELA: Thank you, aunty.

MR. OKAMOTO: Thanks for coming.

CHR. KEKELA: Any other testimonies for today?

MS. KEAMO: No.

CHR. KEKELA: Seeing as there is no other testimony this morning, I'd like to entertain a motion that the public hearing be closed.

ACTION: Mr. Alameda moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Mr. Riznyk and carried unanimously by voice vote (Ayes: 5 – Board Miura, Lee, Alameda, Riznyk, and Chairperson Kekela).

(Public Hearing adjourned at 9:54 a.m.)

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Recording Secretary

APPROVED BY WATER BOARD
(October 27, 2026)