

Subject:Fwd: Updates re restoration of roads & property buyouts

Date:Thu, 13 Aug 2020 14:30:47 -1000

From:Roger Meeker <rvm.tiki@gmail.com>

To:

808imt@gmail.com, alex.boggio@yahoo.com, Charles Hastings <alohacharles@gmail.com>, annkosh1@hotmail.com, Antony Clarke <antonydclarke@gmail.com>, aspfarr@yahoo.com, audreypiilani@hotmail.com, Barrie Soloway <bds@aalava.com>, bejawwhite@aol.com, Beverly Rimer <beverlyee1@sbcglobal.net>, [blackwell mark@hotmail.com](mailto:blackwell_mark@hotmail.com), Fran Chang <bluehorsemoon.fran@gmail.com>, Bud And Delores kinsey <budscasa@gmail.com>, Donna & Cary Orr <cary.orr@icloud.com>, Charles Meredith <ccjv1@yahoo.com>, Cindy Aragon <cgracearagon@gmail.com>, chillmendy@gmail.com, ckdencker@gmail.com, Cynthia Smith <cynthia@smith.net>, Dana Clohan <danaknitting@gmail.com>, daphnepet@aol.com, deanwitt@hotmail.com, denver80218@gmail.com, dianekoerner@yahoo.com, dodd@hawaii.rr.com, Nicole Baylac <drbaylac@gmail.com>, dan <drokovitz@hawaiiantel.net>, Richard Rimer <drimmerdo1@gmail.com>, drmerdo@yahoo.com, dveriato@yahoo.com, dwaynelerma@gmail.com, dwnoll@exede.net, Jeremy Setbacken <eastsiderubbish@gmail.com>, Edward Frazer <ecosurfer.ef@gmail.com>, elswick.amanda@gmail.com, elvisdigsme@hotmail.com, emmanuelreif@yahoo.com, Leiomalama Desha <euueuhale@gmail.com>, fatsax@hotmail.com, fax@soso.org, foxielady8@gmail.com, Gary Miller <gary.miller@attglobal.net>, Gail Johnston <gbeerjohn@gmail.com>, gdencker@gmail.com, giolind@gmail.com, gkapprs@gmail.com, gornden.isaacs@gmail.com, Bob Mitchel <gordomitchel@gmail.com>, Glorious Schreiber <gschreiber207@gmail.com>, happydogsuz@hotmail.com, Harald Barkhoff <harald@hawaii.edu>, harrys@onomai.com, hawaiianspark1@yahoo.com, Susan Hendricks <hihatsue@hotmail.com>, honoceanparadise@gmail.com, Kathy Young <honush@gmail.com>, Jill Steele <hwnmgc@hawaiiantel.net>, Ilse Oles <ilseoles@gmail.com>, in1941.406@gmail.com, iwata.linda@gmail.com, Janet Ah Mook Sang <jahms2000@msn.com>, Janet Ah Mook Sang <janskids1@gmail.com>, jerrydstroud@gmail.com, jesseveriato@yahoo.com, jim.cowles@comcast.net, joelasses@gmail.com, John Theismann <johntheismann@icloud.com>, Julie Languille <julie@julielanguille.com>, jvrlew@gmail.com, Ahulani Haleamaui-Kahawai <kahawai24@gmail.com>, kaletanaka@gmail.com, kandv707@att.net, kapoho55@gmail.com, Art Kimura <kapohohonu@hawaii.rr.com>, Chris Rand <kapohoinfo@aol.com>, Jim & Tricia Morlock <kapohojim@gmail.com>, kapohojj@gmail.com, Karen Neill <kapohokoi@gmail.com>, kapohopa@hawaiiantel.net, kapohosurf@gmail.com, karlalsilva@yahoo.com

[.com](#), Karen Ah Chong <kazmans@gmail.com>, Kevin Woodman <kevin@phoenixwoodworks.com>, krsagawa@hawaii.rr.com, Jim Floyd <kukukanejimbo70@gmail.com>, kulamanuohu@gmail.com, laptop@onomaui.com, lehua67@gmail.com, lielapiianaia@hotmail.com, littlecabin@gmail.com, Lei Nishiyama <lnishiyama@twc.com>, Louise Teasdale <louise.teasdale1@icloud.com>, lswright@gmail.com, A. Lono Lyman <lymana001@hawaii.rr.com>, Lynette Ktva <lynette.ktva@gmail.com>, mailforfloyd@gmail.com, marshallstone@dc.rr.com, melaniewise50@gmail.com, merleo@hawaiiantel.net, Mike Hughes <mhughes@tradewindconnection.com>, mitchell.young00@gmail.com, mlbarctic@aol.com, mshreiber718@gmail.com, murraylapides@gmail.com, nancy.lt.hamilton@gmail.com, Kyle Oshima <oshima.kyle@gmail.com>, Patrice Belcher <pbelcher@hawaii.rr.com>, Paul Chiles <pchiles@gorge.net>, ppayers91127@aol.com, pshiota@netscape.net, pualanipat@gmail.com, Rick Fitzgerald <rfr120@yahoo.com>, rickytickytooooo@gmail.com, Lois Younger <rlyounger@gmail.com>, rmwalker@hawaiiantel.net, Ron Suokko <ron_suokko@yahoo.com>, Roger Meeker <rvm.tiki@gmail.com>, Sam Cai <samcai@yahoo.com>, Harry Samelson <samelson_rokovitz@hawaiiantel.net>, Sandy Shapery <sandy@shaperyenterprises.com>, Sandi Barsell <sbarsell@aim.com>, schmidlaw@gci.net, Sarang Joshi <scjoshi@gmail.com>, sdlund@me.com, Serge Kahili King <serge@huna.org>, SnowFallsRed@gmail.com, Gerry Hills <stjohncaptain@aol.com>, Martha Hills <stjohnsunshine@icloud.com>, Sue Isaacs <susie2008@gmail.com>, Ted Peskin <ted@peskin.net>, Ted Vivatson <tedviva@gmail.com>, terrykellyinorchidland@yahoo.com, Tony Osborne <tony.osborne@hotmail.com>, Lorna Larsen-Jeyte <tutulorna@gmail.com>, twobeerstogo@att.net, Jim Wilson <vjwilsoniii@msn.com>, Wendy Peskin <wendy@peskin.net>, yamakent@gmail.com, Muhammad Yunis <yunis50@msn.com>, Terri Meeker <tkmeeker@gmail.com>

Hello again --

I just realized that the information update I sent out on Sunday only went to Kapoho Forum members. I should have sent it to everyone on our email list (not all of whom are Forum members). My apologies. Below is what was sent the other day.

Aloha, Roger

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Roger Meeker** <rvm.tiki@gmail.com>

Date: Sun, Aug 9, 2020 at 7:05 PM

Subject: Updates re restoration of roads & property buyouts

To: Kapoho Beach Lots <kapoho-beach-lots@googlegroups.com>

Greetings, everybody --

How things change, yes? I hope this note finds everyone safe and sound. Who would have thought six months ago that we would find ourselves in this situation. But that's a whole 'nother conversation ...

I wanted to provide a quick update on a couple of subjects that many of you may not be aware of. First, since late 2018 there has been a push by a number of individuals in the Lower Puna area to have the public roads fully restored. Finally, Hwy 132 was restored down to Four Corners earlier this year. In June 2020 it was announced that other roads would also eventually be restored. The next priority is to rebuild Pohoiki Road, and funding is available for that. After that, a portion of Leilani Avenue (in Leilani Estates) will be restored, the portion of Lighthouse Road covered by lava, as well as the stretch of Hwy 137 (Red Road) from Four Corners to Kapoho Kai Drive (the access road to Vacationland Hawaii). To my knowledge, as of now there are no plans to restore the entire stretch of Hwy 137 to Pohoiki. See attached article. Several owners in Kapoho Farm Lots and Vacationland Hawaii have indicated a desire to resettle their area, so this is welcome news to them.

Second, federal money has been authorized to fund a buyout program for owners interested in having the County purchase their properties. The Voluntary Housing Buyout Program has been set up to organize and process these applications, and their plan is to start rolling out the program in April, 2021. Applicants will be prioritized according to their financial need and whether their property was a primary residence or not. There will be a maximum cap of \$230,000 per buyout. See article attached.

Following is the link to the County website that explains the buyout program in more detail. If you think you might be interested and eligible for the buyout program, please save this link and check out further updates and information they provide. I don't have any additional information to share regarding this aside from what is available on the site.

<https://recovery.hawaiicounty.gov/planning/recovery-funding/cdbg-dr/action-plan>

Needless to say, it's been a rough couple of years, folks. At this point, we cannot know when it will be safe and prudent to schedule our "annual" meeting/get-together. We were all looking forward to reconnecting this past Spring. Unfortunately, COVID-19 had other ideas, so we'll just have to see how things play out going forward. Good luck and best wishes to everyone as we navigate the challenging times ahead.

Aloha, Roger

Roger V. Meeker, President

Kapoho Beach Community Association

P.O. Box 57

Hawaii National Park

Hawaii 96718

email: rvm.tiki@gmail.com

phone: (808) 557-2223

Hawaii

Tribune Herald



Wednesday, June 17, 2020 Proudly serving Hilo and the Big Island since 1923 75 cents

'Finally' out of limbo

County announces more road restorations for lower Puna

By **MICHAEL BRESTOVANSKY**
Hawaii Tribune-Herald

The Hawaii County Kilauea Recovery Task Force confirmed Tuesday that it will restore several more roads in lower Puna that were buried by lava during the 2018 Kilauea eruption.

During a meeting of the County Council's Committee

on Governmental Relations and Economic Development, County Recovery Officer Doug Le announced that the county will clear three more sections of road in lower Puna, in addition to the upcoming project to reopen Pohoiki Road.

Those sections include:
• Leilani Avenue from Pohoiki to Kahukai Street.

- 900 feet of Lighthouse Road, along with a plan for public access at Kumukahi.

- A stretch of Highway 137 from the Highway 132/ Lighthouse Road intersection to Kapoho Vacationland.

In addition, the temporary



LE

road to Isaac Hale Beach Park on Highway 137 will be restored to permanent standards.

Le said the Kilauea Recovery Task Force came to the decision to restore those roads after consideration of several factors, including extensive discussions with community members.

The announcement is a

boon to lower Puna residents who have been unable to permanently return to their properties for two years without a maintained or repaired road.

"Finally!" said Debra Smith, president of the Vacationland Hawaii Community Association board. "We've been in limbo for so long."

Smith told the Tribune-Herald she is one of

See **ROADS** Page A6

ROADS From the front page

three homeowners whose Vacationland home survived the eruption and remains largely unharmed but inaccessible in a kipuka. The homeowners, with other area property owners, worked with the county for more than a year to determine how to reopen Lighthouse Road while protecting local burial sites.

While Smith said she thinks Highway 137 should be opened all the way to Pohoiki Road for emergency access purposes, reopening it to Kapoho Kai Drive will allow Kapoho residents to begin to clear the roads in the destroyed subdivision.

Kapoho property owner Eric Cockroft said the rehabilitated roads will allow Puna to recover economically from the 2018 disaster.

"It's going to be great to be able to drive home again," Cockroft said. "We've seen, with



KELSEY WALLING/Tribune-Herald file photo

Rocks and concrete barriers block access to Lighthouse Road at the end of Highway 132 in Puna.

Highway 132, how quickly people go back to their land. You already see people with bulldozers out there rebuilding. I'm looking forward to seeing orchid farming start up again. It's going to be a great economic driver for Puna."

Smith and Cockroft both said the news is a ray of hope for a

community that has spent more than two years unsure of whether they will ever be able to return home.

"It's changed the whole aura of everything for me," Cockroft said. "Before it was starting to feel like death was right over my shoulder, but now I feel like there's something to live for."

Cockroft urged the county to develop a timeline for reopening the roads as quickly as possible, but added that he sees no reason the Highway 137 reopening can't be done within three months.

However, Le said no timeline for the road reopenings has been determined, as each

project will require substantial prep work and assessments from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which in March identified about \$82 million in damage to public roads by the Kilauea eruption. FEMA entered an agreement with the county to cover 75% of that sum, or about \$61.5 million.

Preparations for the Pohoiki reopening project are complete on the county side, Le said, but still need a final notice to proceed from FEMA. Le said it is unclear whether FEMA's activities have been delayed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Le also announced that the county will not restore Hinalo, Lauone and Honua'ula streets in Lanipuna Gardens. Funding for roads that will not be reopened will be applied to other recovery projects in Puna.

The recovery team also is discussing with FEMA the total damage to the county by the loss of resources such as Isaac Hale Beach Park and Ahalanui Park, saying that sum is currently estimated to be somewhere in the "single-digit millions" range.

Email Michael Brestovansky at mbrestovansky@hawaiitribune-herald.com.

Hawaii

Tribune Herald



Wednesday, July 29, 2020 Proudly serving Hilo and the Big Island since 1923 75 cents

Buyouts could start in '21

Hundreds who lost homes in 2018 eruption could be eligible for up to \$230K



Tribune-Herald file photo

Lava from fissure 8 fills Kapoho Bay, left, and covers Champagne Ponds on June 4, 2018, in lower Puna.

By MICHAEL BRESTOVANSKY
Hawaii Tribune-Herald

Former Puna residents whose homes were destroyed by the 2018 Kilauea eruption can choose to sell their properties to the county through a nearly \$80 million recovery program.

The Voluntary Housing Buyout Program is the central focus of an action plan submitted by the county to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in order to receive \$83 million in Community Development Block Grant funding. Of that funding, \$78 million would be used to buy out owners of property that was destroyed, isolated or damaged during the 2018 eruption.



LE

The program, which is anticipated to begin in April 2021, will prioritize buying properties from households with low to moderate incomes, as well as properties that were owners' primary residences, said Disaster Recovery Officer Douglas Le.

The program will first prioritize making buyout offers to documented primary residences, then secondary residences and finally undeveloped residential parcels. The action plan also stipulates that condos or other housing units that "share any

See BUYOUTS Page A8

BUYOUTS From the front page

common wall or area” will not be eligible for the program, nor will recreational vehicles or campers used as residences be compensated.

Le said the program will aim to buy out approximately 300 homes, although he added that is a benchmark based on property value assessments, not a hard target.

According to the action plan, 612 homes were destroyed during the eruption, 294 of which were primary residences.

Buyout prices will be determined by pre-eruption property assessments conducted in 2017, although the action plan specifies that no buyout price will go above \$230,000, the median appraised market value of properties in the region during that time.

Because of this, Le said, no price distinction

will be made based on the current state of a property — a property completely buried by lava will be bought out at the same price as an identical property only isolated by lava.

The county also will deduct the total of any insurance payouts for the property from the final buyout price, Le said.

Le also said that any structures on a property that is bought out will be demolished post-sale.

The program could be a lifeline for former residents struggling financially ever since the eruption.

Roger Meeker, president of the Kapoho Beach Community Association, said he suspects most property owners in the Kapoho area would be interested in the deal.

“Some people might be holding out for a better price, but if

you’re listening to the scientists, it’s going to be a long time before there’s anything to go back to,” Meeker said.

Although the eruption ended almost two years ago, scientists determined that lower strata of the lava flows are still in a red-hot, liquid state and are dangerous to develop over.

Meeker said some property owners likely will take losses on the deal. Some Kapoho properties, he guessed, could have been worth nearly \$1 million before the eruption, but he added that much of that value came from their beachfront location, which is no longer the case now that lava has completely filled Kapoho Bay.

Most owners, he said, will be better off taking what money they can from the deal.

Former Lanipuna

Gardens resident Kieba Blacklidge said she speculates her property, a primary residence as well as a business, might be worth substantially more than \$230,000 right now.

“Fissure 22 is right where my backyard was,” Blacklidge said, explaining that the slopes of the fissure could be a valuable source of cinder rock.

However, Blacklidge went on, the shelly pahoehoe lava around her property is too treacherous for her to even return. Without a plausible way to return to her property anytime soon, and needing more money to build a new home in Hawaiian Shores, Blacklidge said the program is looking more and more attractive.

“If it’s just \$10,000, \$12,000, I’ll probably decline,” Blacklidge said. “But if I got around \$60,000,

\$70,000, that would be acceptable, I think.”

Leilani Estates resident Kris Burmeister, meanwhile, said he has no intention of selling his property, but supports the program nonetheless.

While his primary residence also was destroyed, Burmeister said he can still access his property, which includes a vacant lot neighboring his former home that was not entirely inundated.

“I can still walk right there, which makes me feel like I haven’t lost it at all,” Burmeister said. “I wouldn’t sell it for the world. I lucked out, but there’s a lot of people who didn’t.”

While Burmeister said he has heard some concerns from fellow Leilani residents that the county will turn the bought-back properties into a public trail system — an influx of tourists to the area

“won’t fly down there,” he said — he generally supports a program that will keep the land from being redeveloped.

“Preserve it. Leave it alone. Let’s not make the same mistake twice,” Burmeister said. “Don’t bother redeveloping down there.”

“People asked why the county allowed a subdivision to be built in Lava Zone 1 at all. If we redevelop down there, people will be asking the same thing the next time this happens.”

The action plan is available for public review at recovery.hawaiicounty.gov. The county is soliciting public comment on the plan, which can be submitted to kilauearecovery@hawaiicounty.gov until Aug. 18.

Email Michael Brestovansky at mbrestovansky@hawaiitribune-herald.com.