



Volcano School of Arts and Sciences April 2024 News

Punalu'u, VSAS Students Advocate to Protect a Local Treasure

23 VSAS students were among hundreds of people attending the Windward Planning Commission meeting on March 7 to hear testimony from the public on a proposed 147-acre commercial and residential development at Punalu'u. Among forth-some residents and supporters who testified in opposition to the development were VSAS students, Leiahi'ena Ka'awa and Alden Wells.

Leiahi'ena Ka'awa, a junior at VSAS and lineal descendant from Punalu'u and Ninole, testified, "Punalu'u is home to native, endemic and endangered plants and animals, ancient and traditional places of worship and ceremony, ancestral burials and fresh water springs... [which] have provided the people of Ka'u an abundance of food and resources to feed the multitudes of generations," she said. "The untouched and undeveloped state of Punalu'u would allow us to keep these practices alive. I speak today in hopes of finding a more sustainable and practical avenue of land management to the fragile environment that Punalu'u is."

Punalu'u is a wahi pana long recognized for its archeological and ecological significance, which includes heiau, a historic cemetery, petroglyphs, koa shrines, ancient burial sites, and one of the last undeveloped coastlines in Hawai'i. It is also a nesting ground for the endangered hawksbill and green sea turtles, and a refuge for endangered Hawaiian monk seals, all of whom are protected by law.

According to 'Ölelo No'eau #1887, "Kū ka hale i Punalu'u, i Ka-wai-hū-o-



Photo by Leiahi'ena Ka'awa

Kauila. The house stands at Punalu'u, at the gushing water of Kauila. [Said of one who has found peace and comfort at last.] Ka-wai-hū-o-Kauila is a spring that was a gift of the turtle goddess to the people of Punalu'u (Pukui, 1983)

Many of VSAS students are from Punalu'u. Throughout the years, VSAS elementary, middle school, and high school students have held classes at Punalu'u to kilo (observe) natural phenomena, listen to stories from local kupuna, conduct scientific studies, clear invasive plants, learn mo'olelo, and much more. Elementary students study the endangered hawksbill turtle, culminating in excursions to Punalu'u to watch the newly-hatched baby turtles scurry from their nests into the ocean for the very first time.

Black Sand Beach, LLC, (headed by California resident Eva Liu), has submitted a plan to develop the area. The proposed plan, called Punalu'u Village, includes 225 luxury vacation and residential rental units, a fish market and seafood restaurant, a retail strip, a private wellness center with a gym, pool and dozens of individual 1500-square-foot bungalows, as well as expansion

of the existing golf course and other amenities.

This is not the first time in recent years that outside interests have attempted to develop the area. In the 1970s, a golf course and condo complex was built, along with a restaurant just mauka of Ninole Pond that was destroyed by a tsunami in 1975. In 2006 a subdivision of over 1,400 single- and multi-family homes and short-term rentals was proposed. Based on their overwhelming opposition, Ka'u residents were able to stop this latter development.

Alden Wells, VSAS senior, testified, "Punalu'u is one of the only places left on this island... that has these coral reef ecosystems that are still thriving," said VSAS senior Alden Wells. "I speak on behalf of my generation and those who will come after me."

After eight hours of testimony and 50 more people still waiting to testify before the Planning Commission on March 7, the Commission recessed. The hearing will resume at a date yet to be announced and the public is invited.



Cooper Center's Volcano Community News



NEWSLETTER #415

APRIL 2024

All newsletter submissions MUST be in by the 10th of the month. Ads placed must provide us with snail mail addresses or ad will not be placed. This Volcano Community News, published by Cooper Center Council, will reinstitute the requirement that ALL submission must be in a digital format. We will not digitize a hand written submission for anyone. If you can't do it, find someone to help you.



**“Festival in the Forest”
Cinco de Mayo
(on the 3rd)
Friday, May 3rd, 4 to 7 pm
Cooper Center**

This event is back by popular demand, the food awesome and the bar beverages refreshing. Come, and come early to share great food by Volcano Cookshop.

This year will be nothing less than fantastic, with a great plate of tacos with chicken, beef, or vegetarian choices at the amazing price of \$15.00. Juice or water for those that do not imbibe, and for those that do, we will have your choice of Volcano Red beer on tap, some bottled Mexican beer, wine, and of course Margaritas at \$5.00 each. Also at the bar...chips and salsa. Remember if you have your Cooper Cup bring it for a dollar off on your drinks.

Children have not been forgotten, we'll have piñatas and a table for coloring and drawing their favorite pictures.

Entertainment is not confirmed at the time of newsletter publication.

Volcano Run on July 27th

Are you ready to run with us? The Volcano's 'Ōhi'a Lehua Runs is back for a fifth year! The race is slotted for Saturday, July 27th. It will be held during the Experience Volcano Festival weekend, where visitors can experience all the uniqueness and beauty of Volcano. The race will feature a half marathon and 5k distance again with the half-marathon beginning at 7:00 a.m. and the 5K following shortly after. The course will take runners through Volcano Village and up Wright Road. The event will have ROD information and shoe sanitation for runners from UHH. Besides the shirt and medal that runners will receive as part of their entry fee, they also get to enjoy complimentary breakfast burritos and chai tea from Volcano Cookshop.

To register and for more information about this event, please visit <https://www.ohialehuahalf.com/>.

