

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM (DBEDT)

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT DIVISION (BDS)

MINUTES OF THE HAWAII SISTER-STATE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2017, AT 10:12 AM AT
NO. 1 CAPITAL DISTRICT BUILDING, 250 S. HOTEL ST., HONOLULU, HI 96813
IN CONFERENCE ROOM #436

Committee Members Present were:

Kaho'okeleholu Hannahs	-	Native Hawaiian Cultural Organization
Debra Nakama	-	Speaker of the House of Representatives
Jean E. Rolles	-	East-West Center (Interim Appointment)
Eduardo Topenio Jr.	-	President of the Senate

Committee Administration:

Margaret Ahn	-	Attorney General
Dennis T. Ling	-	DBEDT/BDS
Mark Ritchie	-	DBEDT/BDS
Selma S. Malcolm (Recording)	-	DBEDT/BDS

Public Attendance:

Ikaika Anderson	-	Hawaii State Association of Counties
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CALLED TO ORDER:

Mr. Dennis Ling called the meeting to order on Friday, September 29, 2017, at 10:12 a.m. He welcomed all the members present and thanked them for serving on the Hawaii Sister-State Committee.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Orientation

While orientating the new members of the Hawaii Sister-State Committee, Mr. Ling stated that the legislature several years ago, passed legislation authorizing the committee to review both proposed and existing sister-state relationships. In the past, the committee has ruled out requests for sister-states where there was not enough business interactions. A number of the sister-states were not very active. He stated that the sister-state relationships were not just partnerships between governments but should be active with ongoing private sector participation to sustain the relationship. The Legislation also authorized the sister-state committee to review the past sister-state agreements to

determine if any of them should be eliminated.

1. The committee reviewed its statutory authority under chapter 229, Hawaii Revised Statutes. It was agreed that meetings will be called/held when there is a new application for a sister-state to process and if there are proposals to address.
2. Regarding the State Ethics Code and the Sunshine Law for board and commission members; Ms. Margaret Ahn reminded the members that the intent of the Sunshine Law is to open up governmental processes to the public for scrutiny and participation. Therefore, discussions of official board business should only be done in open meetings. The official business of the board are recommendations regarding initiating, maintaining and dissolving sister state relationships. Ms. Ahn stated that discussions not only mean in person but also by telephone, email and social media.

Routine administrative matters can be discussed among members but if there is something that members would like to say about official board business, then they should send that information to staff, who could consult Ms. Ahn and figure out the best way to disseminate it to the board members. She also explained the remedies for violations of the Sunshine Law.

State Code of Ethics: Ms. Ahn stated that the most applicable provision is the conflict of interest provision which means that no employee including the board members should take any official action directly affecting the business or undertaking in which he or she (including spouses and dependent children) has a substantial financial interest. The Code also prohibits a board or commission member from accepting any gift if it is reasonable to infer that that gift is intended to influence or reward official action. She also stressed that it is important to note that a gift can be anything of value including money, personal services, meals, travel, etc.

Mr. Anderson asked whether financial conflict would require a member to abstain or would it just require that he or she state their conflict. Ms. Ahn replied it would require that they abstain if the action directly affects a business in which the member has a substantial financial interest.

3. The Committee members reviewed the term status of Hawaii Sister-State Committee members per Hawaii State Boards and Commissions.

Mr. Topenio asked what was the difference between sister-state relationships and the sister cities. Mr. Ritchie explained that a sister-state relationship is a broad-based, long-term partnership with a province, prefecture or state in another country, while the sister-cities are established by each respective county. Currently, there are 18 sister-state relationships.

Mr. Ling noted that there are various ways to become a sister-state, and if a community organization or a community member feels that a certain jurisdiction should become a sister-state, they should:

- apply directly through DBEDT, or
- contact a representative or senator and have them introduce a resolution that directs the sister-state committee to evaluate their application for establishing a sister-state.

Mr. Ling also stated that the criteria for approving a sister-state relationship besides being mutually beneficial, is continued support from community organizations, business organizations, trade organizations, and professional organizations. Those organizations should develop activities or events to help to sustain the relationship. DBEDT advises applicants that strong community support is needed to establish and maintain a sister-state relationship.

4. The committee reviewed the draft sister-states annual report to the Legislature. Mr. Ritchie suggested that copies of the 2017 report be made available to members in December 2017, to be reviewed/discussed at the next committee meeting.

B. Application for Sister-State Relationship with Aklan

The Committee then took up House Resolution No. 77 H.D. 1 (2016) requesting that the Hawaii Sister-State Committee review and consider the establishment of a sister-state relationship between the State of Hawaii and the Province of Aklan, Republic of the Philippines and forward its recommendation to the Legislature. The Sister-State Committee concurred with DBEDT's testimony on the point that Hawaii already has five sister-state relationships with provinces in the Philippines, which is the most it has with any country, and that exchanges with these sister-states, especially in trade, education, investment and other mutually beneficial economic development areas have been limited so far. The Committee agreed with DBEDT's testimony that efforts be placed on revitalizing existing sister relationships within the Philippines rather than entering into new ones.

There was only one individual who had submitted written testimony in support of House Resolution No. 77 (2016). The testimony was from Dr. Danielo E. Abayon, President of Aklan State University. No Hawaii-based groups submitted written testimony. The primary areas of interest of Dr. Abayon, as noted in his testimony, were academic exchanges and joint research. A sister-state relationship is not necessarily needed for Aklan State University and the University of Hawaii or some other educational institution in Hawaii to negotiate an MOU covering these areas.

One of the main areas proposed for sister-states is tourism. Since the resorts in Aklan are concentrated in a city or municipality, the Sister-State Committee suggested that an appropriate city in Aklan initially pursue a sister-city relationship with one of the counties in Hawaii.

Motion was made by Debra Nakama and seconded by Kaho'okeleholu Hannahs to recommend to the Legislature that it defer on the establishment of a sister-state relationship with Aklan. The motion was passed unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1) May 6, 2017 – was the signing of Hokkaido-Hawaii Sister-State Agreement on the lawns at the Hawaii State Art Museum, No. 1 Capitol District Building.
- 2) October 4-6, 2017 – 20th Anniversary of Hawaii mission to Hiroshima, Japan.
- 3) October 14-22, 2017 – Filipino Chamber of Commerce Goodwill and Trade Mission to the Philippines. Governor Ige and First Lady will be attending; and while they are in the Philippines, they will be visiting two sister-states, Ilocos Norte and Cebu.
- 4) November 20, 2017 – will be the signing of the Sister-State Agreement with Goa, India
- 5) 2018 – 25th Anniversary of Hawaii Taiwan Sister-State. DBEDT is trying to coordinate funding to commemorate this relationship. A business trade & investment mission from Taiwan to Hawaii as well as a Hawaii to Taiwan mission to promote international students attraction, tourism, business, etc. were proposed.

- 6) A map will be attached to future sister-state application forms.
- 7) Mr. Ritchie to prepare a list of duties and responsibilities of the chairman, to be elected at the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING:

TBA

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: