



December 6, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL (blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov)

Dawn N.S. Chang, Chairperson
Board of Land and Natural Resources
1151 Punchbowl Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: December 8, 2023 Agenda Item D-12 - Renewal of Revocable Permit No. S-7915;
Resorttrust Hawaii, LLC, Permittee; Waialae, Honolulu, Oahu, Tax Map Key: (1) 3-5-023:041

Aloha Chairperson Chang and Members of the Board of Land & Natural Resources (Board):

Resorttrust Hawaii, LLC (RTH) is the owner of The Kahala Hotel & Resort ("The Kahala") which has been an integral part of the community for over 59 years, and our 500 employees reside across the island of Oahu. We are a proud member of the Waialae-Kahala area and have served both malihini and kama'aina for many years. We are seeking renewal of Revocable Permit S-7915.

Since RTH became the owner of the hotel, The Kahala has taken steps to meaningfully include kama'aina and the public. Because several of the Board members are new this year, I would like to introduce myself to the Board and provide the Board an update of what has been undertaken since last year. As the first native Hawaiian, Kamehameha Schools Kapalama alumnus, and locally born and raised person to lead The Kahala as its General Manager, I have made cultural and environmental preservation, including community involvement, a primary focus of the future of The Kahala Hotel & Resort.

I believe that, although The Kahala proudly provides luxury accommodations, the underlying vision is for The Kahala to pivot and be a place where guests, employees, area businesses, local schools, and the public are welcome to learn about the special area of Waialae-Kahala and the ahupua'a in which The Kahala resides. Our guests can engage with employees and the local community to better understand how our daily actions impact our environment and culture, and to learn how they can also engage in a pono way.

In 2022 I began the work of organizing both a Cultural Hui and an Environmental Hui, including private, public, and non-profit organizations to gather and discuss what we can do as a group to impact and preserve the Waialae-Kahala area for generations to come. Some of the members of these hui include the Waialae Country Club, Kahala Beach Apartments, Kahala Mall, Kahala Neighborhood Board, and non-profit organizations including Malama Maunaloa, Maunaloa Heritage Fishpond Center, and Ko'olau Mountain Watershed Partnership. Each hui has the goal of creating a group that represents our area, and that can be a mutual resource to bring awareness and education, and create initiatives that can preserve Hawaiian culture as well as our environment, the preservation of which is symbiotic to the preservation of the culture.

These groups met every other month, and the focus has been on educating members about the cultural heritage sites within in our area starting with site visits, and developing an understanding of the wahi pana in Maunaloa. We have also created programs to allow each of the member organizations to actively participate in supporting these heritage sites. In 2023, we merged these two groups into one hui under KISCA (Kahala's Initiative for Sustainability Culture and the Arts) and this group now meets monthly. Through the evolution of our meetings we agreed that Hawaiian culture and the environment are intrinsically tied, hence combining these two groups. It is my belief that we have a responsibility to educate, and education is how we will create impact.

The Kahala has created programs and events that are open to both hotel guests and the public alike. In 2021, 2022, and 2023, we held several events to celebrate World Ocean's Day, Earth Day, and May Day. Activities were held in the lobby (following all safety protocols), allowing guests to engage with experts in reef restoration, forest reforestation, lauhala weaving, and other cultural activities. These were open to the public with no admission fees and validated parking was provided. To ensure community awareness, we utilized both radio ads and the local news. We will continue these initiatives moving forward.

We have created a live touch tank experience open to the public, where marine biologists who are actively researching coral restoration can engage and educate. We have a Keiki Art workshop open to kama'aina keiki, allowing them to create ocean inspired art and learn about environmental stewardship.¹ We are also present a monthly Sunset Seminar Series which invites the community to engage and learn about culture and environmental preservation.² In 2023, we added other cultural activities including 'Ohe Kapala (bamboo stamping), upena ho'olei (Hawaiian fishing), lei making, coconut husking, and storytelling by kupuna.

I have also created an environmental stewardship video, similar to what was recently released by Hawaiian airlines, but with a focus on the Waialae ahupua'a. This resource video is used to educate about the connection and relationships between these areas and how actions and activities in each area are intrinsically connected to one another. I am also a member of HTA's Destination Management Action Plan Steering Committee for the island of O'ahu,³ and helped develop the action plans proposed, all of which align with the vision of cultural and environmental preservation. The recommended plans place community engagement at the forefront, and focus on regenerative tourism where malihini engage with the community and learn how to enjoy the beauty and culture of Hawaii and all it has to offer in harmony. It is this shift, of creating tourism that educates malihini, which will allow us to preserve our island home for generations to come.

Our website notes that the beach and grassy area fronting The Kahala are public lands and open for the public to enjoy.⁴ Additionally, as required by the Board, we have worked with Department of Land and Natural Resources staff to delineate the mauka boundary of the State's RP property, and to install signage to make it clear that the public is welcome to use the State RP property. The signage was fully installed as November 2021. In addition, although not a requirement of the Board, RTH also added signage to make clear that the fresh water shower is open to the public.

¹ See Keiki Art In partnership with the Coral Resilience Lab at The Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology, at <https://www.kahalaresort.com/Experiences/Calendar?view=weeklyEvents&category=0&start=11%2F08%2F2021>

² See Sunset Seminar Series at The Kahala, at <https://www.kahalaresort.com/>

³ See <https://www.hawaiiourismauthority.org/what-we-do/hta-programs/destination-management-action-plans/oahu/steering-committee/>

⁴ "This beautiful beach and grassy area fronting the resort is public land and available for public to enjoy." <https://www.kahalaresort.com/Experiences/Pool-Beach>

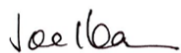
As part of RTH's RP, the hotel continues to clean and maintain the public beach fronting The Kahala as well as the State RP property. Maintenance costs for the year 2023 are approximately \$80,500. The public also has access to use the two restroom facilities adjacent to the Seaside Grill restaurant, which is located on hotel property. There is no key system and the restrooms are completely accessible to the public and unsecured from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm daily. For security and cleaning purposes the restrooms are cleaned and secured from 10:00 pm to 6:00 am. The nearest official public restroom is at Waialae Beach Park, a six minute walk from the beach fronting The Kahala.

The modest uses authorized under the RP paired with the obligation to clean, maintain, and insure the State property, as well as pay rent to the State, strike an appropriate balance. In addition to the economic benefits to the State through the payment of RP rent and avoided maintenance costs, The Kahala's stewardship under the RP has enhanced public use and enjoyment of the beach and RP premises, and protected the resource not only through keeping the area pristine and open, but also by providing a fresh water shower for public use.

It was recently brought to The Kahala's attention, through Mr. Tyler Ralston's testimony submitted for the August 25, 2023 Board meeting, that more than the allowed 70 chairs have been preset on the State parcel on certain occasions. While inadvertent, to ensure that no more than the maximum 70 chairs are preset on the State parcel, The Kahala implemented a new policy on August 26, 2023. The new policy requires the hotel managers to do a count of the chairs and tables every evening that will be preset in the morning, with additional counts being done by hotel staff and managers the following morning.

In summary, The Kahala understands its responsibility to be a steward of the State Parcel, as well as in providing a venue for education of culture and environmental stewardship. When issues are raised, we do our best to address them in a timely manner. We are committed to ensuring that The Kahala is seen within the community not only as a center for luxury accommodations and food and beverage, but also as a resource and learning center for the community. I humbly request that we be granted approval for the renewal of Revocable Permit No. S-7915 for 2024.

Malama Pono,



Joe Ibarra
General Manager

`A `ohe hana nui ke alu `ia
No task is too big when done together by all
Olelo No`eau 141