

**Statewide Independent Living Council of Hawai'i
Monthly Meeting Minutes [DRAFT]**

Date: January 15, 2025

Time: 9:02 AM – 10:45 AM

Location (Zoom): <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83211242897>

Location (In Person): Hub Coworking Hawaii, 1050 Queen St Suite 100, Honolulu, Hawai'i

Call to Order – Philip Ana

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 AM.

Roll Call / Attendance – Donald Sakamoto

SILC Members Present:

- Philip Ana, SILC Member (Vice Chair)
- Jodi Asato, SILC Member
- Patrick Gartside, SILC Member (Chair)
- Judy Guajardo, SILC Member
- Valerie Janikowski, SILC Member
- Vickie Kennedy, SILC Member
- Donald Sakamoto, SILC Member (Secretary)
- Annette Tashiro, SILC Member (Treasurer)

SILC Members Absent:

- Catia Garell, SILC Member
- Brian Hauser, SILC Member
- Leti Mizuno, SILC Member
- Nani Watanabe, SILC Member

Staff:

- Amanda Lowe, Executive Director

Guests:

- Kathleen Kenny, Na Hoaloha (Presenter)
- Cheryl Matthews, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Quorum established.

Independent Living Philosophy – Amanda Lowe

Amanda read the Independent Living Philosophy statement: Independent living is a movement, program, and philosophy founded on the belief that people with disabilities should enjoy the same civil rights, choices, and autonomy as those without disabilities. People with disabilities have the right to live in the community of their choice with access to necessary supports and home and community-based services. People with disabilities are the best experts on their own lives and bodies, deserving of equal opportunity to decide how to live, work, and participate in their communities.

Agenda Review – Patrick Gartside

Patrick noted ongoing work to ensure the agenda is accessible and compliant with the Sunshine Law. A community member raised concerns about:

- How to access the meeting and request accommodations
- The phrasing of agenda item 9B regarding public testimony

Motion: Patrick Gartside motioned to amend agenda item 9B from "Vote on public testimony" to "Discussion about public testimony" to allow for broader discussion including SILC member testimony at other meetings (per Annette's suggestion).

Second: Vickie Kennedy

Result: Unanimous approval

Approval of Minutes – December 2024

Donald Sakamoto thanked Amanda Lowe for using AI technology to assist with transcription and Annette Tashiro for review of the detailed minutes.

Motion: Annette Tashiro motioned to approve the minutes.

Second: Donald Sakamoto

Result: Unanimous approval

SILC Reports

SILC Activities Report – Amanda Lowe

Amanda welcomed everyone back from the holidays and provided December activity updates:

- **Network Coordination:** Regular meetings continue between SILC Executive Director and the two Centers for Independent Living (CIL) Executive Directors. Collaborating on the first-ever report to the Governor on Independent Living Network activities.
- **December Quarterly Meeting Success:** Robust meeting with community partner presentations from Assistive Technology Resource Centers of Hawai'i (ATRC), Hawai'i Disability

Rights Center (HDRC), Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council (5 legislative bills), and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on emergency preparedness (State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) Goal 4).

- **Department of Education Meeting:** Annette and Amanda attended the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) meeting in December.
- **No Wrong Doors:** SILC members continue attending bi-monthly meetings to ensure Hawai'i residents can access services regardless of which door they enter.
- **Employment TA Webinar:** Members participated in Disability Employment Technical Assistance (TA) Center webinar on "Empowerment Through Partnership Toolkit" with real-world collaboration examples.
- **Housing Accessibility Initiative:** A SILC member is working on a policy initiative to fast-track home modification permits in Honolulu. Currently, seniors and people with disabilities face 5-6 month delays for critical modifications (grab bars, ramps, accessible bathrooms). The initiative proposes a health modification permit category reducing processing time to 30-45 days.
- **HDRC Board:** Amanda was voted in as a board member for Hawai'i Disability Rights Center in December.

State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) Committee Report – Amanda Lowe

The committee received approval from Administration for Community Living (ACL) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to proceed with SPIL amendments. The amendments will be substantive rather than technical, requiring public hearings. The committee will schedule a meeting soon.

Note: Initial notification to ACL occurred the day before the government shutdown, causing delays in response.

Policies and Procedures Committee Report – Amanda Lowe

The committee is close to finalizing the draft. Philip provided feedback, and Amanda will add:

- Ex-officio member language (per Philip's suggestion) to match bylaws
- Testimony guidelines for SILC members representing the council at other meetings

Discussion: Valerie noted recent changes to ex-officio voting rights under state nonprofit laws and will send the reference to Amanda.

Survey Committee Report – Amanda Lowe

The committee has survey copies and examples from two other states to review. A meeting will be scheduled.

Advocacy Committee Report – Philip Ana

Federal Advocacy:

- Members signed up for town hall meetings with Senator Brian Schatz
- Shared information from Senator Mazie Hirono on constituent meetings during the break
- Monitoring federal cuts, particularly to fair housing programs
- Distributed Justice for All webinar on Medicaid work requirements (some disability exemptions apply)

Randolph-Sheppard Act – Donald Sakamoto:

Donald reported on advocacy for blind vendor programs. The Department of Defense Secretary sent a letter to the Department of Education Secretary regarding elimination of Army dining room vending programs at military bases. Schofield Barracks no longer has a blind vendor. Approximately 55 bases nationwide have these programs, and advocates are concerned other branches may be next. Donald contacted Congresswoman Jill Tokuda's office about this issue.

Transportation Report – Donald Sakamoto:

- Citizens for a Fair Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) meeting: February 19th at the Hub, 9:45-11:45 AM
- Real-time scheduling issues continue for Handi-Van users, especially for medical appointments
- Attended O'ahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) transportation meeting with Department of Health (all-day event on transportation, housing)
- Bill 54-2025 (Transit Fare Increases): Proposed increases include: annual adult fare from \$880 to \$990 (12.5%); monthly adult fare from \$80 to \$90; 7-day pass from \$35 to \$45 (28.5%); senior annual fare from \$45 to \$50 (11%); HandiVan one-way from \$2.25 to \$2.50 (11%). Personal care attendant fee was removed from the bill after advocacy. Third reading scheduled for January 28th.
- Transit Equity Day: February 4th (Rosa Parks' birthday). Donald advocating for free rides to commemorate the day, as done in other major cities nationwide.

Audio Pedestrian Signals – Vickie Kennedy:

Vickie reported that Hawai'i Association of the Blind met with Department of Transportation Services Director John Nouchi three years ago about installing audio signals on Punchbowl Street (from Beretania to King Street). Despite his agreement, no progress has been made. The association is now working with Howard Lester and Appleseed to push for legislative action.

Act 253 Update – Cheryl Matthews (DVR):

Cheryl reported that Ho'oponono (blind services program) received funding for a two-year pilot program to coordinate services on neighbor islands. Two positions are being established. The program's administrative rules are being updated due to the transportation component. DVR Administrator Gavin will reach out to SILC and CILs for input, particularly regarding transportation barriers. Target start date: July 1, 2025.

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Report – Patrick Gartside:

SILC holds a required seat on the SRC. Two committees have been meeting:

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified State Plan Committee recommendations:

- Partnership between SRC, DVR, and SILC for disability community education and outreach
- Business-to-business employer mentoring approach
- Structured employer interactions (tours, mixers) instead of standard job fair booths
- Formalized partnerships with CILs, DD providers, adult mental health, and clubhouses for long-term supports
- Focus on neighbor island transportation funding and barriers
- Alternative credentialing (e.g., Master of Social Work with Certified Employment Support Professional credential)
- Unified WIOA website/digital resource consolidating partner information
- Support for DVR's Learning Management System (LMS) for training (Cheryl clarified LMS not yet implemented)

A second committee is working to standardize reports given at SRC meetings.

Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation (HART) Accessibility Issues – Amanda Lowe

Amanda, Philip, Donald, and others have been corresponding about Dillingham Boulevard construction accessibility concerns affecting a blind resident. Hawai'i Disability Rights Center (Lou, Howard Lester) and Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) are involved. A meeting is scheduled for Friday with HART representatives. Amanda will report back to the council.

Financial Report – Annette Tashiro

Financial highlights as of December 31, 2024:

- Total Assets: \$206,978
- Current Assets: \$205,548
- Asset Deposits: \$1,430
- Total Liabilities: \$701
- Total Equity: \$206,276
- Total Income (through December): \$8,467
- Total Expenses: \$7,368 (salary, benefits, services, facility costs, general expenditures)
- Net Operating Income: \$1,099
- Cash Ending: \$204,772

Motion: Donald Sakamoto motioned to accept the Treasurer's report.

Second: Patrick Gartside

Result: Unanimous approval

Daniel K. Inouye Airport Rail Station – Donald Sakamoto

Donald is working with the State Department of Transportation and the City regarding accessibility at the airport Skyline station. He plans to conduct an in-person assessment with a SILC member to evaluate accessibility for blind individuals traveling between the airport and rail station.

Break

10-minute break taken.

Guest Presentation

Learning From Others: Vision Impairment Support Services on Maui – Kathleen Kenny, Na Hoaloha

Kathleen Kenny, Kūpuna Support Navigator with Na Hoaloha on Maui, presented on her work with the vision loss community.

Kūpuna Support Navigator Role:

- Serves people over 60 and those under 60 with disabilities
- Assists with benefits (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Med-Quest, Social Security)
- Coordinates healthcare, housing applications, food access
- Conducts in-person visits to uncover needs not apparent over the phone

Background: Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist and Vision Rehabilitation Teacher with 15 years of experience working with adults with vision loss and intellectual disabilities before moving to Maui 10 years ago.

VIBES Support Group (Vision Impairment and Blindness Education and Peer Support):

- Monthly in-person meetings at Maui Economic Opportunity (MEO) in Wailuku
- Kathleen has facilitated for 9 years (group existed before her arrival, started by Na Hoaloha)
- Open to all ages (40s to 102 years old) and any degree of vision loss
- Averages about 20 attendees; close to 30 regular members
- Includes people newly diagnosed (being proactive) to those totally blind
- Family members and friends welcome
- Serves lunch; friendships have formed outside the group

Group Focus:

- Members learn from each other about adjusting to vision loss
- Provides understanding that family/friends often cannot offer
- Example: A younger member helped convince another member to stop driving through respectful peer conversation

- A member was inspired by retired and current blind vendors to pursue the New Visions program

Agency Collaboration:

- ATRC: Device demonstrations and show-and-tell
- Vickie Kennedy and Buddy: Presented personal story on adjustment to blindness
- Ho'opono (Older Individuals who are Blind program): Annual visits, coordinated low vision clinic
- Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (Matt Brown): Annual updates on services
- National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Hawai'i (Luann Blake): NFB-NEWSLINE services
- Veterans Administration (VA): Coordinates low vision equipment funding for veteran members

Why In-Person: During the pandemic, members preferred to wait for in-person meetings rather than use Zoom. They value being in the room together, touching products, sharing meals, and for some, it is the only time they leave home each month.

Hawai'i Association of the Blind Cane Donation: Kathleen received approximately \$1,000 worth of canes and cane tips for distribution on Maui. She noted that well-meaning family members often purchase incorrect cane sizes.

Discussion: Donald invited Kathleen to share concerns with the National Federation of the Blind for legislative advocacy. Vickie commended Kathleen for running an upbeat, engaging group. Judy thanked Kathleen for her work and noted the value of volunteers learning about vision impairment through driving participants to meetings.

Old Business

Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities – Donald Sakamoto

Donald reported that New Jersey's new governor is establishing a committee for persons with disabilities. He forwarded this information to Governor Josh Green, Mayor's staff (Managing Director Mike Formby, Deputy Managing Director), and Andy Kawano (Mayor's representative to the Neighborhood Board). The Mayor's Committee was previously transferred from Community Services to the Managing Director's office. Donald will follow up at the Neighborhood Board meeting and advocate for both city and state-level disability advisory committees.

Note: A fire alarm required temporary evacuation of the building. The meeting resumed outside and continued via Zoom.

Housing Accessibility – Kevin Auger Meeting

Donald and Amanda met Kevin Auger, new Director of Housing for the City, at the O'ahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) transportation meeting. They discussed concerns about accessible housing in transit-oriented developments (TODs), which are targeting 80% area median income (AMI) residents.

Donald is coordinating with contractor Kirk Kurio to meet with Director Auger about ground-floor accessible units with accessible bathrooms and kitchens. Director Auger indicated willingness to meet (2-3 weeks scheduling lead time needed).

New Business

Discussion on Public Testimony

Time Limits:

Motion: Philip Ana motioned to establish a 3-minute limit on public testimony with accommodations available upon request.

Second: Donald Sakamoto

Discussion: Donald noted that deaf individuals using closed captioning may need additional time to read and respond.

Result: Unanimous approval

SILC Member Testimony at Other Meetings:

Annette raised the need for procedures governing who is authorized to represent SILC when providing testimony at external meetings (legislature, City Council, etc.). Amanda will add guidelines to the Policies and Procedures manual, potentially requiring chair/vice chair/executive director approval before representing SILC. Cheryl suggested this could be part of a "member packet" for onboarding new members.

Open Discussion / Announcements

SILC Marketing Materials – Donald Sakamoto:

Donald suggested creating business cards, official SILC email addresses, T-shirts, and lapel pins for council members. Patrick noted that email addresses should be addressed in the Policies and Procedures manual with appropriate training. Business cards will be ordered.

Legislative Session – Donald Sakamoto:

The legislature opens January 21st with an open house where constituents can meet with representatives at their offices.

Meeting Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Annette Tashiro

Second: Donald Sakamoto

Result: Motion passes unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM.

