

**MITCH D. ROTH**

MAYOR

August 15, 2024FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HAWAIʻI COUNTY PROVIDES UPDATE ON AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM RULEMAKING**

Hawaiʻi County announces the recent decisions made by the Director of Finance, Diane Nakagawa, regarding rulemaking changes discussed during the public hearing held on July 18, 2024, in Hilo. These changes pertain to the County's Purchasing Division and Real Property Tax Division, focusing specifically on rules impacting commercial agricultural use and property dedications approved by the County Council in 2023.

"Our administration is committed to creating a sustainable island where our keiki can thrive for generations to come," said Mayor Mitch Roth. "A key part of that vision is supporting and encouraging agriculture to reduce our reliance on imported foods and the associated costs. These rules aim to provide the necessary tools and resources for farming and land cultivation while also ensuring accountability. We want to make sure that those who commit to these efforts are contributing to the betterment of our island home."

**Key Decisions and Actions**:

**Rule 4 Adoption**: The Director of Finance has officially adopted amendments to Rule 4, relating to the County’s purchase of materials, supplies, equipment, and services. The finalized rule is now available on the Department of Finance’s website at Department of Finance Rules.

**Rule 32 Amendments and Rule 33 Repeal**: The Director of Finance has also adopted the proposed amendments to Rule 32, relating to the dedication of lands in urban districts for landscaping, open spaces, public recreation, and other similar uses. Additionally, Rule 33, which dealt with the dedication of residential properties to nonspeculative residential use, has been repealed in its entirety. Both finalized rules can be accessed via the Department of Finance and Real Property Tax Division websites at Real Property Tax Rules.

**Additional Time for Decision on Remaining Rules**: For Rules 31, 31A, 31B, 34, and 34A, which relate to various aspects of commercial agricultural use and community food sustainability assessments, the Director of Finance has decided to extend the decision-making period. The Director requires additional time to thoroughly review and consider the extensive oral and written testimony received during the public hearing. The final decisions on these rules are now scheduled to be announced on October 15, 2024.

**Community Resources and Next Steps**:

To help the community better understand the changes, the Department of Finance has developed additional resources including an FAQ guide that will be available on its website in the coming days. This guide aims to address common questions and provide clarity on the new rules and processes.

Additionally, a farm plan template and applications, mentioned during the public hearing, will be available on the Department’s website starting September 2, 2024. These documents are designed to assist in the application process and to support the continued growth of sustainable agriculture in Hawaiʻi County.

Mayor Roth added, “We would like to thank our Council and Finance team for listening to the community and finding ways to strengthen the law while ensuring folks have the means to continue doing what they love on their properties.”

For more information or to stay updated on the decision-making process, please visit the Department of Finance’s website at Department of Finance Rules and the Real Property Tax Division website at Real Property Tax Rules [www.hawaiipropertytax.com](http://www.hawaiipropertytax.com).

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