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**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING  
HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY  
Friday, February 21, 2025, 9:30 a.m.**

**Virtual Meeting**

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BOARD MEETING**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mufi Hannemann (Chair), Mahina Paishon (Vice Chair), Kimberly Agas, Todd Apo, David Arakawa, Stephanie Iona, James McCully, Roy Pfund, James Tokioka (Ex Officio, DBEDT Director), Chris West, Mike White

**MEMBER NOT PRESENT:**

Lisa Paulson

**HTA STAFF PRESENT:**

Daniel Nāho'opi'i, Kalani Ka'anā'anā, Caroline Anderson, Talon Kishi, Carole Hagihara

**LEGAL COUNSEL:**

John Cole

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Hannemann called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

**2. Roll Call to Announce Name of Participating Board Members and to Identify Who Else is Present with Board Member if Location is Nonpublic**

Ms. Anderson conducted the roll call, and all Board members were in attendance, except for Ms. Paulson who was excused. Members who attended via Zoom were by themselves.

**3. Opening Protocol**

Mr. Nāho'opi'i opened the meeting with the Aloha chant.

#### **4. Presentation, Discussion and/or Action on the Plans for 2025 U.S. Market Saturation Activations**

Chair Hannemann introduced the single agenda item, which was that the good news that Gov. Green had increased the HTA operating budget for the 2026 fiscal year (FY26) by an additional \$3 million for the U.S. base market brand marketing with another \$3 million for Japan brand marketing. The Chair added that the \$3 million for Japan was to recur in FY27.

Chair Hannemann publicly acknowledged and thanked the Governor for this budget increase. There were robust discussions about the budget, with various ideas expressed in votes during several Board meetings. The Chair noted that some Board members had expressed their feelings about the budget to the Governor. Chair Hannemann had always believed that the budget should exceed \$70 million, and the Governor had clearly stated to the Chair and other Board members that he would be open to increasing the budget if the fiscal situation were to improve. The Governor had proposed an addition to the budget, and the administration was requesting a \$76 million operating budget from the legislature.

Chair Hannemann had been delighted with the stance of the administration and had already heard from members of the legislature who supported the budget increases. The Chair encouraged all Board members to inform the Governor of their appreciation, noting that the Governor had a difficult task since every State agency hoped for a larger budget. It was gratifying that the Governor had been able to honor the HTA's desire for an increase.

Chair Hannemann acknowledged the role of the Director of the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, (DBEDT), James Tokioka, and Brooke Wilson, who had been very supportive in transmitting the desires of the HTA. The Chair also appreciated the Director of the Department of Budget and Finance (B&F), Luis Salaveria, who had advised the Governor.

The Chair reminded Board members that during the present meeting, they were to consider an opportunity to tap into the \$6.3 million the Governor had authorized for release. This money had been part of the DBEDT budget and had been restricted until the Governor's authorization. In effect, the Governor had consented to unrestricting this money, ensuring that the legislature would agree with the supplemental requests. The Chair stated that this represented a major step in showing that the administration acknowledged the role of the HTA.

Mr. McCully asked whether Mr. Pfund was present at the meeting, and members of the HTA staff responded that he was not yet present.

Mr. Nāho'opi'i stated that Ms. Anderson was to present several slides, adding that the present meeting had been initiated by the January 31, 2025 declaration by the Governor that \$6.3

million of previously restricted funds from the DBEDT budget was to be released to support the recovery of the visitor industry from the downturn caused by the 2023 Maui wildfires.

Mr. Nāho'opi'i stated that at their meeting the previous day, the Brand Standing Committee (BSC) had made a motion to the Board recommending approval of \$6.3 million to HTUSA for California market activation in 2025, consistent with the Governor's intent to address Maui's recovery and the California downturn, subject to approval by the Budget, Finance, and Convention Center Standing Committee (BFCCSC). The purpose of the present meeting was to discuss this motion, and the forthcoming presentation would provide more details of the California market activation so that the Board would be comfortable approving the allocation of \$6.3 million to HTUSA for the market activation.

The HTA staff had requested that the Board go into the Executive Session to give a presentation on the details of the activation to protect the HTA's competitive advantage in branding and marketing.

AG Cole stated that the Board was going into Executive Session pursuant to SB201-B4, allowing for Executive Session for the Board to receive information that should be kept confidential to protect the competitive advantage of Hawai'i as a visitor destination.

Chair Hannemann noted that Mr. Pfund had a prior commitment but would attend the meeting shortly. Mr. Pfund had proposed the motion that had been recommended by the BSC, and this was restated by Ms. Anderson as follows:

The Brand Standing Committee proposed that the Board approve \$6.3 million to HTUSA for California market activations in 2025, consistent with the Governor's intent to address Maui's recovery and the California downturn, subject to BFCC approval.

The motion was seconded by Chair Hannemann, and the floor was opened for discussion.

Mr. Nāho'opi'i asked for a motion to go into Executive Session.

Mr. McCully proposed that the Board go into Executive Session, and the motion was seconded by Ms. Iona.

Chair Hannemann asked for any opposition or abstentions. There were none, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Mr. McCully asked whether any non-staff persons would be invited to attend the meeting.

Mr. Nāho'opi'i responded that the HTUSA staff present in the room were Ms. Goo, Ms. Hagihara, Mr. Ka'anā'anā, Mr. Kishi, Ms. Anderson, and himself.

The Board members entered the Executive Session at 9:45 a.m.

[Executive Session]

The Board members returned to the regular session at 11:09 a.m. AG Cole reported that the Board had a robust discussion, took a vote, and unanimously moved to approve \$6.3 million to HTUSA, be focused on Maui Recovery efforts with a plan to be approved by the Board, based on consideration of the Governor's intent and proposal to be presented by the HVCB, subject to budget approval.

## **5. Adjournment**

Chair Hanneman adjourned the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



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Sheillane Reyes  
Recorder