

Business Revitalization Task Force

7th Meeting Minutes

Meeting was held virtually via Zoom and physical location at 250 South Hotel Street, Room 435,
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
September 12, 2025
2:00 p.m. – 3:17 p.m.

PRESENT:

1. **James Kunane Tokioka, Director**
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
2. **Dean I Hazama, Deputy Director**
Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs
3. **Kristen Sakamoto, Deputy Director**
Department of Taxation
4. **David J. Rodriguez, Equal Opportunity Officer**
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations
5. **Amy Asselbaye, Executive Director**
Honolulu Office of Economic Revitalization
6. **Jade P. Rojas-Letisi, Executive Assistant**
Office of the Mayor, County of Maui
7. **Dennis Lin, Deputy Director**
Department of Research & Development, Hawai'i County
8. **Nalani Brun, Director**
Office of Economic Development , County of Kauai
9. **Tessa Gomes, Representative**
Small Business Regulatory Review Board
10. **Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director**
Hawai'i Farm Bureau
11. **Alec Sou, President & General Manager**
Aloun Farms
12. **Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director**
Hawai'i Food Industry Association

13. **Roseann Freitas, Chief Executive Officer**
Building Industry Association of Hawai‘i
14. **Tina Yamaki, President**
Retail Merchants of Hawai‘i
15. **Monty Pereira, GM and Sales & Marketing Director**
Watanabe Floral
16. **Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Founder & Chief Executive Officer**
Oceanit
17. **Sue Kanoho, Managing Director**
Island Chapters & Executive Director, Kaua‘i Visitors Bureau
18. **Constancio Paranal, Representative**
Filipino Chamber of Commerce of Hawai‘i
19. **Wendy Laros, President & Chief Executive Officer**
Kona-Kohala Chamber of Commerce
20. **Tonga Hopoi, Vice President, Economic Development, Government & Community Relations**
Chamber of Commerce of Hawai‘i

ABSENT:

1. **Sandra Fujiyama, Director of Pacific Asian Center For Entrepreneurship**
University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Shidler College of Business
2. **Jimmy Chan, Owner & Founder**
Hawaiian Chip Company
3. **Kurt Miyashiro, Manager**
MK Equipment Corporation
4. **Jeannine Souki, Senior Manager, Government & Regulatory Affairs**
Hawaiian Telcom
5. **Jacob Aki, Public Affairs Manager**
Alaska Airline
6. **Sherry Menor- McNamara, Chief Executive Officer**
Chamber of Commerce Hawai‘i

Staff Members:

Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT),
Research and Economic Analysis Division (READ): Seth Colby, Joseph Roos,
Mustafa Shirzad, Oscar Carvallo Valencia, Laura Viso, Jacob Vuillemin

CALL TO ORDER:

Time lapse: 2:01 p.m. – 2:04 p.m.

Seth Colby called the meeting to order 20 members were present.

SUMMARY:

Agenda Item 1. Communication to the Task Force and Public Comment

Time lapse: 2:04 p.m. – 2:05 p.m.

Seth Colby opened the floor for public comments and noted that no testimony or comments had been received. He then opened the floor for any new comments from the public. No additional comments or issues were raised.

Agenda Item 2: Approval of the July 17, 2025, meeting minutes.

Time lapse: 2:06 p.m. – 2:07 p.m.

Seth Colby called for a motion to approve July 17, 2025, meetings minutes. Director James Tokioka proposed a motion to approve the minutes and Dean Hazama seconded.

Members voted in favor:

1. James Kunane Tokioka
2. Dean I Hazama
3. Kristen Sakamoto
4. David J. Rodriguez
5. Jade P. Rojas-Letisi
6. Dennis Lin
7. Nalani Brun
8. Tessa Gomes
9. Brian Miyamoto
10. Alec Sou
11. Lauren Zirbel
12. Roseann Freitas
13. Keali'i Haverly
14. Monty Pereira
15. Sue Kanoho
16. Wendy Laros

Members voted against:

None.

The motion passed with a majority.

Agenda Item 3: Discussion of Hawai‘i Business Competitiveness Act and use of CNBC ranking

Time lapse: 2:07 p.m. – 2:58 p.m.

Acknowledgment of Efforts

Seth Colby introduced the Hawai‘i Business Competitive Act and opened the floor for discussion. Director James Tokioka thanked Seth Colby and the group for drafting a proposal with measurable standards, noting that previous efforts often lacked clear metrics. He added that while some may disagree on the best measurement approach, the inclusion of measurable benchmarks is widely appreciated.

Concerns about Timeline

Roseann Freitas and others raised concerns about the tight timeline, given the slow pace of legislation and implementation. Alternatives discussed included extending the final benchmark to 2045 (aligning with renewable energy targets) and structuring goals in increments (e.g., 2030, 2035, 2040). Amy Asselbaye suggested trying targets to enactment dates with year-based increments rather than fixed calendar years.

The following timeline was agreed upon:

- 40th or better 5 years after enactment
- 30th or better 10 years after enactment
- 20th or better 15 years after enactment
- 10th or better 20 years after enactment

Budget Proposal

Seth Colby recommended allocating \$250,000 annually, emphasizing that funding is essential for research, staffing, stakeholder engagement, and task force effectiveness. Director James Tokioka and Patrick Sullivan supported the inclusion of financial resources, noting that underfunded task forces often fail. Alec Sou proposed structuring funding with periodic increments or bonuses tied to achieving benchmarks.

Draft Content and Language Revisions

Wendy Laros and Patrick Sullivan highlighted that the draft may not fully incorporate all of the expectation set in statute such as improving competitiveness through regulatory/tax mitigation and government efficiency. Wendy Laros discussed the wording of the proposed act, in particular the Challenges and Goals sections. She proposed that current wording frames it as a “choice” rather than a “challenge”. Members suggested clearer language connecting the challenge to measurable actions. Members agreed to revise language to stress Hawai‘i’s commitment to measurable competitiveness improvements. Seth Colby agreed to incorporate revisions with input from members and prepare an

updated legislative proposal. A revised version will be circulated ahead of the next meeting for further review.

Structure and Purpose of Task Force/Commission

Brian Miyamoto expressed concern about its broad makeup and the absence of clear selection criteria. Director James Tokioka stated that appointments will be made by the House, Senate, and Governor to ensure balanced participation. Seth Colby underscored the importance of selecting members who could dedicate significant time to the task force's work. Both Sue Kanoho and Tina Yamaki emphasized the need to include private sector representatives alongside government members to ensure well-rounded perspectives.

The group agreed to approve the proposed act with the modifications and revisions discussed during the meeting. Patrick Sullivan proposed the motion, which was seconded by Wendy Laros.

Members voted in favor:

1. James Kunane Tokioka
2. Dean I Hazama
3. Kristen Sakamoto
4. David J. Rodriguez
5. Amy Asselbaye
6. Jade P. Rojas-Letisi
7. Dennis Lin
8. Nalani Brun
9. Tessa Gomes
10. Brian Miyamoto
11. Alec Sou
12. Lauren Zirbel
13. Roseann Freitas
14. Tina Yamaki
15. Monty Pereira
16. Dr. Patrick Sullivan
17. Sue Kanoho
18. Constancio Paranal
19. Wendy Laros
20. Tonga Hopoi

Members voted against:

None.

The motion passed with a majority.

Agenda Item 4: Discussion and Vote of Top 10 Recommendation to Include in the Report and Report Outline.

Time lapse: 2:58 p.m. – 3:10 p.m.

Seth Colby opened discussion on the “Top 10” recommendations, noting the option to vote individually or forward them as findings. Roseann Freitas proposed including them as task force findings without individual votes, allowing the future commission to study each in detail. Tina Yamaki and Sue Kanoho emphasized assessing the impacts of any recommendation on businesses and costs to the state, with Tina Yamaki warning of added burdens on tourism. Roseann Freitas and Tonga Hopoi stressed analyzing financial consequences and impact scenarios. This was supported by Lauren Zirbel. Kristen Sakamoto and Patrick Sullivan highlighted the need for cost–benefit and risk evaluations before legislative action. Wendy Laros suggested categorizing them by CNBC themes rather than ranking. David Rodriguez opposed recommendation number two, citing risks to Hawai‘i’s prepaid healthcare law. The group agreed to forward all recommendations as findings, with the commission to review further. Lauren Zirbel proposed the motion which was seconded by Monty Pereira.

Members voted in favor:

1. James Kunane Tokioka
2. Dean I Hazama
3. David J. Rodriguez
4. Amy Asselbaye
5. Jade P. Rojas-Letisi
6. Dennis Lin
7. Nalani Brun
8. Tessa Gomes
9. Brian Miyamoto
10. Alec Sou
11. Lauren Zirbel
12. Roseann Freitas
13. Monty Pereira
14. Dr. Patrick Sullivan
15. Sue Kanoho
16. Constancio Paranal
17. Wendy Laros
18. Tonga Hopoi

Abstained:

1. Kristen Sakamoto

Voted with reservation:

1. Tina Yamaki

The motion passed with a majority.

Agenda Item 5: Discussion and Vote on Permitted Interaction Groups (PIGs) if Needed.

Time lapse: 3:10 p.m. – 3:10 p.m.

Seth Colby stated that no discussion or vote was needed regarding the permitted interaction groups.

Agenda Item 6: Discussion of Agenda Items for next Meeting

Time lapse: 3:10 p.m. – 3:16 p.m.

Seth Colby stated that the next meeting would focus on the final report to the Legislature, including an outline for task force to review and final action. Wendy Laros requested clarification on meeting schedule in light of the legislative session timeline. In response, Seth Colby proposed holding a meeting to deliver the first draft of the Task Force report, the final language of the Competitiveness Act, and corresponding legislative proposal.

Agenda Item 7: Schedule for next meeting

Time lapse: 3:16 p.m. – 3:17 p.m.

Seth Colby suggested scheduling the next meeting for late October or early November, with the specific date to be determined through a Doodle poll.

NEXT SETPS

1. DBEDT/READ team to modify and revise Hawai'i Business Competitive Act according to the comments received by Taskforce members.
2. DBEDT/READ team to convert the Hawai'i Business Competitive Act proposal into a legislative proposal.
3. DBEDT/READ team to align all recommendations (without ranking) with the CNBC business ranking categories and to include it in the final report to the legislature.
4. DBEDT/READ team to prepare the final report to the legislature and to include Hawai'i Business Competitiveness Act, PIGs recommendations, DBEDT/READ reports, and PIGs full reports.
5. DBEDT/READ to send out a Doodle poll for scheduling the next meeting for the end of October/Early November 2025.

AJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.