



**MINUTES
FOR THE MEETING OF THE
HAWAI'I BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES**

DATE: September 19, 2014
TIME: 9:00 am
PLACE: Leiopapa A. Kamehameha Building
Office of Planning, 6th Floor Conference Room
235 S. Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

AGENDA ITEM 1: Call to Order

Mr. Kamana'o Mills, Chairperson of the Hawai'i Board on Geographic Names (HBGN or Board), called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

The following were in attendance:

MEMBERS: Kalani Akana (Office of Hawaiian Affairs); Joan Delos Santos (Office of Planning); Betty Kam (Bernice P. Bishop Museum); Kamana'o Mills (Department of Hawaiian Home Lands); and Ryan Morales (Land Survey Division)

ABSENT: Holly McEldowney (Department of Land and Natural Resources); Noenoe Silva (University of Hawai'i)

ADVISORS: Renee Louis, PhD.

Guest: Debra Mendes (Office of Planning); Drew Decker (U.S. Geological Survey)

AGENDA ITEM 2: Approval of Meeting Minutes of August 21, 2014

Approval was deferred because August meeting minutes had not yet been completed.

AGENDA ITEM 3: Status of HBGN Names Database Organization and Publication Initiative

Ms. Delos Santos stated that the purpose of the initiative was to organize the HBGN place names database in a format that would be easier for the board members and the public to use and understand and that would make it easy for someone to find the review status and official spelling of a place name in Hawai'i. She announced that the spreadsheets for all islands had been reorganized, and that the status lists for some islands were already online. The others are under review for accuracy and once reviewed, will also be posted online.

Ms. Delos Santos stated that an anomaly had been discovered while reviewing and reorganizing all place names, in that there seemed to be a discrepancy in the number of names recently downloaded from the US Geographic Names Information System (GNIS), versus the number of names downloaded from GNIS several years ago. Specifically, in the more recent download, there were over 200 names that were in the GNIS database that had not been in the earlier download. Ms. Louis then described various discrepancies in downloads through the years – for example, names that had been present in the GNIS many years ago are no longer part of the database, and, as Ms. Delos Santos noted, names that were not present in earlier downloads now appear as part of the database. Ms. Delos Santos asked Mr. Decker whether he could explain the process by which names are added to or removed from the GNIS database. Mr. Decker said that he would check on it and would work with Ms. Delos Santos on these issues.

AGENDA ITEM 4: Further Discussion of Draft HBGN Style Guide and Past and Future Decision Making Criteria

Ms. Delos Santos announced that Mr. Kepa Mali of Lāna‘i Island expressed an interest in contributing information to be considered when developing the style guide. Office of Planning Director Leo Asuncion will provide Mr. Mali with Ms. Delos Santos’ contact information so that he can participate if he desires to do so.

Mr. Mills gave a brief summary of style guide’s purpose and the reasons that the effort to develop a style guide was undertaken. Over the past two decades, the Board had been following the ‘Ahahui ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i guidelines for spelling Hawaiian words and names. After a number of discussions, the Board decided that it would help to develop its own style guide specifically for the Board when it makes decisions on geographic names, for the purposes of consistency and transparency. Once adopted, it is the guidance document the Board will use.

Mr. Mills described edits to the draft guide since the last meeting:

- Removed numbers from the naming criteria/policies so as not to imply that any one criteria is more important than another. The Board will determine the relative weight of each criteria as names are reviewed, considering the individual characteristics of the name.
- Names expert Mr. Larry Kimura provided input at a previous Board meeting, and his suggestions were incorporated where appropriate.
- Bibliography was reorganized.
- Added additional resources to be consulted/considered.
- Added additional naming examples as requested by Mr. Akana.

Mr. Mills asked whether the Board should hold a vote to formally adopt the naming guide, and Board members agreed that adoption should be a formal process. Once adopted, the guide should be posted to the website. The vote will be held at a future Board meeting, since so many Board members were absent.

Ms. Kam asked about the status of the Mauna Kea name. Ms. Delos Santos stated that the latest Board decision had been to spell the name with two words, however, more research is required.

Ms. Louis noted that the policy of the US Board on Geographic Names is that there is only one official name per feature. She suggested that although only one name per feature could be submitted to the national board, the Hawaii Board may wish, at some future date, to adopt a policy of allowing more than one official name for each feature, as this is the beauty of the Hawaiian language.

Mr. Mills agreed that this is a good point, and merits further discussion. He gave the example of the different possible spellings of Mauna Kea (Maunakea), noting that the spellings had the same letters but different arrangement of the letters. Ms. Louis noted that if this policy were adopted at some point, a preface in the naming guide could explain that no judgment is made as to which spelling is the more “appropriate” name, but that since only one name can be submitted to the USGS, the guide would be used to determine which spelling to submit.

Ms. Kam agreed that it is important to have a preface saying that no judgment on the merit of different versions of a name is being made. Ms. Louis agreed, saying that perhaps something could be added to make clear that the guide is not an indication of principles, but instead is addressing issues of policy, procedure, methodology and approach.

Ms. Louis noted that some in the community disagree as to whether diacritical marks should be added at all, because Hawaiian was an oral (not written) language. Ms. Kam said that while diacritical marks may not be necessary for those fluent in the language, they play an important part in both pronunciation and understanding the meaning of words for those less fluent. Ms. Kam asked whether there is an organized group that is opposed to the use of diacritical marks. Ms. Louis said that she is not aware of an organized group, but that she knows that there are many in the community who are opposed. Ms. Louis indicated that this topic requires further discussion, and that other board members will want to contribute to the discussion.

Mr. Mills said that he would incorporate the various comments in the next draft of the guide, including the statement that multiple names should be recognized.

AGENDA ITEM 6: Discussion of Maui Island Place Names (Continued review of Maui Island place names for spelling and diacritical marks)

The discussion of Maui Island place names was deferred to the next meeting because knowledgeable board members were absent.

AGENDA ITEM 7: Adjourn

The Board decided to hold the next meeting on October 17 at 8:30 am. Ms. Louis will send out a Doodle poll to determine dates of future meetings. Ms. Delos Santos moved to adjourn, Ms. Kam seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joan Delos Santos