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Landfill Site Panel Wants Distance From Residents

By Michael Levine | 03/16/2012

The panel charged with picking a site for Honolulu's next landfill has identified the key criteria and is moving closer to concluding its work even as it expands the list of potential sites and delays the finished product.

The Mayor's Advisory Committee on Landfill Site Selection's nine members convened in a Ward Warehouse conference room for hours Friday in what was supposed to be its final gathering. But a decision early in the meeting made clear that wouldn't be the case, when the group decided it wanted to re-include spots uphill from residential communities despite possible runoff problems as well as federal government- and military-owned land despite acquisition hurdles.



Michael Levine/Civil Beat

(Read updates from the Inside Honolulu blog: [Makaiwa Gulch Eliminated from Landfill Contention and Makaiwa, Military Parcels Back In](#))

"When the military says no, the federal government says no, you've just got to bang on the door more than once and you'll find out they're your best friend," said Honolulu City Council member Tom Berg, who testified at the meeting and urged the inclusion of federal and military lands. He doesn't want a new landfill to end up in his Leeward Oahu district near where Waimanalo Gulch Sanitary Landfill now sits. He even said that if a Leeward site is selected, he'll make good on his threat to introduce a measure to have his section of Oahu secede from the City and County of Honolulu.

The panel's rationale for removing the screening filters and reinserting potential sites — expanding the list from seven to somewhere between 13 and 22 — was that the criteria-weighting process and the ultimate decision-making process by Mayor Peter Carlisle and the Council will effectively consider the concerns about ownership, runoff and any other issues.

"As you have seen today, the committee is leaving no stone unturned in making its final product defensible," Environmental Services Department spokesman Markus Owens told Civil Beat via email after the meeting.

To that point, the group had accomplished an important goal Friday — weighting 19 criteria for the ranking so that consultants can award points and rank the sites based on the most important factors. The panel identified distance from residential areas as the most critical, followed by proximity to the HPOWER waste-to-energy facility, surface water runoff issues and impacts to traffic, among others.

The committee will next meet on April 5 at 9 a.m. at a site to be determined.

Meanwhile, At Waimanalo Gulch ...

The landfill-siting advisory panel is about a year into its work, which means there's at least six years left until the new landfill is able to start accepting municipal solid waste, regardless of whether its designed to be a replacement for or a supplement to the city's existing landfill at Waimanalo Gulch.

But that facility is required by its permits to stop accepting solid waste — excluding ash — less than five months from now, on July 31. Owens said there are two concurrent tracks that ENV is pursuing to make sure it can keep sending trash to the landfill after the deadline without violating the law.

In the first, the Planning Commission is holding a contested case to determine if the deadline should be eliminated. A hearing in the case was scheduled for this week but was cancelled due to a lack of quorum. If the Commission agrees to eliminate the deadline, the matter would go to the Hawaii Land Use Commission, which would be asked to do the same thing.

If either of those bodies rule against the city, that's not necessarily the end of the line. ENV has also filed a claim in court seeking to strike the deadline from the permit language. The matter was heard by the Hawaii Supreme Court last month. The city needs only one of the two tracks to succeed.

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- 7** 2 dots (blue, green) *London, Pa. Heel*
- 8** 8 dots (red, yellow, green, blue, red, yellow, green, blue) *London, Pa. Heel*
- 9** 8 dots (red, yellow, green, blue, red, yellow, green, blue) *London, Pa. Heel*
- 10** 5 dots (red, blue, green, blue, blue) *London, Pa. Heel*
- 11** 5 dots (yellow, green, blue, red, blue) *London, Pa. Heel*
- 12** 6 dots (yellow, green, blue, blue, yellow, blue) *London, Pa. Heel*
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