

**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**  
KA'ĀINA HULL, DIRECTOR  
JODI A. HIGUCHI SAYEGUSA, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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DEREK S.K. KAWAKAMI, MAYOR  
REIKO MATSUYAMA, MANAGING DIRECTOR

**TRANSMITTAL OF PUBLIC TESTIMONY TO**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION**

DATE: **March 4, 2026**

PERMIT NUMBER(S): **Z-IV-2026-12, U-2026-9 and SP-2026-4**

APPLICANT(S): **KAAWANUI SOLAR LLC.**

Attached for the Planning Commission's reference is Public Testimony pertaining to the permit application referenced above.

*G. Z. A. S.*

MAR 10 2026

## Kenneth Estes

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**From:** Planning Department  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 3, 2026 8:35 AM  
**To:** Kenneth Estes; Shanlee Jimenez  
**Subject:** FW: Letter of Support For Kaawanui Solar  
**Attachments:** C.Gardner - Supportive Testimony for Kaawanui Solar 03.01.2026.pdf

**From:** Carrice Gardner <cncaspillo@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 2, 2026 8:41 PM  
**To:** Planning Department <planningdepartment@kauai.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Letter of Support For Kaawanui Solar

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the County of Kauai. Do not click links or open attachments even if the sender is known to you unless it is something you were expecting.

Dear Chair Members of the Planning Commission,

I respectfully request that the attached **March 1, 2026 revised letter** be accepted and entered into the record in place of the **February 28, 2026 letter of testimony**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carrice Gardner

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Carrice Gardner <cncaspillo@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Sun, Mar 1, 2026 at 9:12 PM  
**Subject:** Letter of Support For Kaawanui Solar  
**To:** <planningdepartment@kauai.gov>

Carrice Caspillo Gardner  
808.635.8122

March 1, 2026

Carrice Gardner  
2371 Kahalou Street  
Kilauea, Hawai'i 96754

**RE: CLASS IV ZONING PERMIT (Z-IV-2026-12), USE PERMIT (U-2026-9) and SPECIAL PERMIT (SP-2026-4) to construct and operate a solar utility facility on lands located on the mauka side of Kaunualii Highway in Makaweli, directly across of the Makaweli Post Office Facility, further identified as Tax Map Keys: (4) 1-7-006:006 (Por.) and 010 (Por.), and containing a project area of approximately 269 acres = KAAWANUI SOLAR LLC.**

Aloha Chair and Commissioners,

I am writing in strong support of the Kaawanui Solar project, both as a professional who works in renewable energy and, more importantly, as someone who calls Kaua'i home. As an AES Hawai'i employee and Stakeholder Relations Manager, I am deeply invested in advancing projects that benefit our community and contribute to a sustainable future.

Over the last decade, I have seen our island become a leader in the clean energy transition through thoughtful, locally driven decision-making. Under the leadership of Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperatives (KIUC), we have proven that it is possible to reduce our reliance on imported fossil fuels while improving grid affordability, reliability, and resilience. Kaawanui Solar builds on this strong foundation and is anticipated to generate approximately 17.5% of our island's energy. By using the sun's power, the Project will decrease reliance on imported fossil fuels, provide power at a low, stable rate for 25 years, and strengthen the grid with battery storage for nighttime use and grid stability. The Project also plans to use the land efficiently, partnering with a local, Kaua'i-based farming company to co-locate on-site agricultural activities. This allows the land to serve multiple purposes that benefit the community – both supporting Kaua'i's 100% renewable energy goals and contributing to West Kaua'i's long-term food security.

Community engagement and environmental stewardship have been central to the development of Kaawanui Solar. Outreach began early and included a public meeting, open houses, small-group meetings, and ongoing opportunities for community input. To date, feedback has been largely positive. The Project has also undergone environmental, archaeological, and cultural reviews as part of the permitting process, and we remain committed to developing this project thoughtfully and responsibly.

Like our Lāwa'i Solar + Storage project and the PMRF Solar + Storage project in Kekaha, Kaawanui Solar will deliver economic benefits to Hawai'i, including approximately 1,064 jobs, \$77.9 million in labor income, and over \$216.7 million in economic output. AES Hawai'i prioritizes hiring locally, supporting skilled jobs with the opportunity for growth. We have employed graduates of Kapa'a High School, Waimea High School, and Kaua'i Community College, and I am fortunate to be among them. My colleagues and I find our

work especially meaningful, knowing the projects that we help bring online will serve Kaua'i long after construction is complete.

Importantly, Kaawanui Solar also includes a decommissioning plan. At the end of its 25-year contract, the facility will be removed, and the site will be restored to its original or comparable condition, ensuring responsible land stewardship for future generations.

I often think about the kind of island we are leaving for future generations. The cost of living here is a challenge, and reducing our dependence on imported fossil fuels is one meaningful way to protect families from rising energy costs over the long term, while improving our resilience, protecting our environment, and providing meaningful job opportunities. Stable, locally produced energy matters not only for today, but for the children who will grow up here and build their lives on this island.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Planning Commission to support this project. Kaawanui Solar provides long-term benefits for Kaua'i and supports a more sustainable, resilient future that aligns with our goals and community values.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Carrice Gardner*

Carrice Gardner

## Kenneth Estes

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**From:** Planning Department  
**Sent:** Friday, February 27, 2026 9:36 AM  
**To:** Kenneth Estes; Shanlee Jimenez  
**Subject:** FW: Ed Nakaya testimony in support of AES Kaawanui Solar Project  
**Attachments:** AES Kaawanui Solar Project Supportive Testimony Ed Nakaya 2026.02.26.docx

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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**From:** nakaya@hawaiiantel.net <nakaya@hawaiiantel.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 26, 2026 3:52 PM  
**To:** Planning Department <planningdepartment@kauai.gov>  
**Subject:** Ed Nakaya testimony in support of AES Kaawanui Solar Project

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the County of Kauai. Do not click links or open attachments even if the sender is known to you unless it is something you were expecting.

To the Kauai County Planning Commission and Planning Department,

Attached is my testimony in support of the AES Kaawanui Solar Project. I strongly urge approval for this important addition to KIUC's energy grid and to the resiliency of our westside community.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Mahalo,

Ed Nakaya

(808) 635-0121

Ed Nakaya  
P.O. Box 164  
Lawai, HI 96765

Contact: (808) 332-8760 [nakaya@hawaiiantel.net](mailto:nakaya@hawaiiantel.net) February 26, 2026

Testimony in support for the AES Kaawanui Solar Project

I am writing in enthusiastic support of the AES Kaawanui Solar Project. I am a lifelong resident of west Kauai, born and raised in the plantation community of Makaweli, and received my primary education at Waimea High and Elementary School. I know the people, communities, socioeconomic and cultural foundations of west Kauai.

I grew up in Pakala Camp, just makai of the proposed Kaawanui Solar Project site. My grandparents lived in Kaawanui Camp 6, mauka of the project. My grandfather and father were employed by Gay & Robinson Plantation. I have personal experience with the unique, deep mutual respect and care that characterizes the multigenerational relationship that the Robinson family has with their plantation workforce ohana. In the face of profound challenges facing Kauai agribusinesses, this project will help them continue to provide housing and other benefits for their workforce ohana and improve the infrastructure and safety of the surrounding community.

Another note of personal disclosure... I am a retiree of KIUC, having worked for 38 years with KIUC and its predecessor Kauai Electric. Most of my work focused on consumer education and outreach, collaborating with schools, community organizations, and businesses of all sizes.

Throughout my years at KIUC, I engaged in many discussions with groups and individuals from west Kauai about our past, current and future means for providing affordable, sustainable energy for all our needs. The path away from near total reliance on fossil fuels was thematic for all my career. I know and personally share in our community's hopes and concerns for our island's energy future in the face of climate change.

For over a decade I chaired the educational programs of the Kauai Economic Development Board as a community volunteer, with workforce development for Kauai students as the primary focus of our efforts. AES has always been a strong partner in providing STEM education and workforce opportunities for our youth. To have many of our students directly engaged in local application of science fundamentals in creating solutions to our world's most pressing existential issues is a priceless aspect of this project.

Through inclusive, careful collaboration with our stakeholders and community-at-large, our island energy cooperative has fashioned a feasible, sustainable, affordable, and environmentally appropriate energy solution that fits well with our island's resources and heritage. Now, twenty-four years after its formation, Kauai's member-owned cooperative is reaping the economic, environmental, and service reliability benefits of its carefully developed energy resource plan.

I currently live in a quiet residential community just mauka of the AES Lawai solar facility. During construction, noise was minimal and today we experience no visual nor other disruption as it supplies clean, abundant renewable energy to our KIUC grid. It is a good neighbor.

Thank you for the opportunity to add my voice of support for approval of this project.

Sincerely,

Ed Nakaya

## Kenneth Estes

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**From:** Planning Department  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 25, 2026 10:20 AM  
**To:** Kenneth Estes  
**Cc:** Dale Cua; Shanlee Jimenez  
**Subject:** FW: Kauai Chamber - Testimony in Support of the Kaawanui Solar Project  
**Attachments:** Kaawanui Solar Project Testimony.pdf

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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**From:** Seann Hartnell <seann@kauaichamber.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 25, 2026 10:01 AM  
**To:** Planning Department <planningdepartment@kauai.gov>  
**Subject:** Kauai Chamber - Testimony in Support of the Kaawanui Solar Project

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the County of Kauai. Do not click links or open attachments even if the sender is known to you unless it is something you were expecting.

Aloha Members of the Kaua'i County Planning Commission,

My name is Seann Hartnell, I'm the new President and CEO of the Kaua'i Island Chamber of Commerce. I just stepped into this role and I'm still getting my feet under me, but one thing is already very clear, our business community is excited about opportunities that move Kaua'i forward in a sustainable, practical way. That's exactly why I'm writing today to offer my full support for the land-use permits needed for the Kaawanui Solar Project.

I've spent a lot of time talking with our members, small business owners, farmers, hoteliers, retailers, contractors, and folks in just about every sector, and the feedback on projects like this is overwhelmingly positive when they see real, local benefits. Kaawanui checks those boxes in a big way.

This 43 MW solar array with battery storage will cover about 17.5% of the island's energy needs and power the equivalent of more than 16,000 homes every year using clean, homegrown energy. For our businesses, the biggest draw is the stable, low fixed price for power over the full 25-year life of the project—cheaper than what we're paying for fossil fuels right now. In a place where energy costs can make or break a small operation, that kind of predictability is huge. It helps everyone plan better, keep prices down for customers, and stay competitive.

Economically, the numbers speak for themselves: over its lifetime, the project is expected to support around 1,064 jobs statewide (many of them right here on Kaua'i during construction and operations), bring in \$77.9 million in labor income, and generate more than \$216.7 million in total economic output. That means more paychecks going to

local families, more money circulating through our stores and restaurants, and stronger tax revenues to support the services we all rely on. In a post-pandemic recovery where we're still working hard to diversify beyond tourism and agriculture, these are the kinds of jobs and dollars that make a real difference.

I also really appreciate how the project is being done thoughtfully. The new substation and battery system will strengthen the grid, especially on the west side where reliable power matters so much to businesses. It's temporary land use—after 25 years everything comes out and the land goes back to how it was or better. And the fact that AES is teaming up with a local Kaua'i farming company to grow food right there under the panels is smart. It's not just energy; it's helping with food security too, which is something our agricultural members care deeply about.

On the environmental side, avoiding over 179 million gallons of fuel and cutting 2.35 million metric tons of CO2 equivalent over the project's life is meaningful progress toward the island's 100% renewable goal by 2033. Cleaner air and a smaller carbon footprint also help keep Kaua'i attractive as a place to live, work, and visit—something that directly supports thousands of jobs in our tourism industry.

I've reviewed the materials, talked with people who know the project well, and looked at the community engagement that's been going on. From what I've seen, Kaawanui has been planned with respect for Kaua'i's culture, environment, and people. I believe it's a good fit for our island.

So on behalf of the Kaua'i Chamber of Commerce and the hundreds of businesses we represent, I respectfully urge the Commission to approve the permits so this project can keep moving forward. We need more clean, reliable, affordable energy if we're going to build the resilient economy our community deserves.

Mahalo for your time and for the careful work you do on behalf of all of us. I'm happy to answer any questions or talk more if it would be helpful.

Seann

**Seann Hartnell**  
**President and CEO**



4268 Rice Street, Suite I

Lihue, HI 96766

808-652-9045

[www.kauaichamber.org](http://www.kauaichamber.org)



## **Testimony in Support of the Kaawanui Solar Project**

Aloha Members of the Kaua'i County Planning Commission,

My name is Seann Hartnell, I'm the new President and CEO of the Kaua'i Island Chamber of Commerce. I just stepped into this role and I'm still getting my feet under me, but one thing is already very clear, our business community is excited about opportunities that move Kaua'i forward in a sustainable, practical way. That's exactly why I'm writing today to offer my full support for the land-use permits needed for the Kaawanui Solar Project.

I've spent a lot of time talking with our members, small business owners, farmers, hoteliers, retailers, contractors, and folks in just about every sector, and the feedback on projects like this is overwhelmingly positive when they see real, local benefits. Kaawanui checks those boxes in a big way.

This 43 MW solar array with battery storage will cover about 17.5% of the island's energy needs and power the equivalent of more than 16,000 homes every year using clean, homegrown energy. For our businesses, the biggest draw is the stable, low fixed price for power over the full 25-year life of the project—cheaper than what we're paying for fossil fuels right now. In a place where energy costs can make or break a small operation, that kind of predictability is huge. It helps everyone plan better, keep prices down for customers, and stay competitive.

Economically, the numbers speak for themselves: over its lifetime, the project is expected to support around 1,064 jobs statewide (many of them right here on Kaua'i during construction and operations), bring in \$77.9 million in labor income, and generate more than \$216.7 million in total economic output. That means more paychecks going to local families, more money circulating through our stores and restaurants, and stronger tax revenues to support the services we all rely on. In a post-pandemic recovery where we're still working hard to diversify beyond tourism and agriculture, these are the kinds of jobs and dollars that make a real difference.

I also really appreciate how the project is being done thoughtfully. The new substation and battery system will strengthen the grid, especially on the west side where reliable power matters so much to businesses. It's temporary land use—after 25 years everything comes out and the land goes back to how it was or better. And the fact that AES is teaming up with a local Kaua'i farming company to grow food right there under the panels is smart. It's not just energy; it's helping with food security too, which is something our agricultural members care deeply about.

On the environmental side, avoiding over 179 million gallons of fuel and cutting 2.35 million metric tons of CO2 equivalent over the project's life is meaningful progress toward the island's 100% renewable goal by 2033. Cleaner air and a smaller carbon footprint also help keep Kaua'i attractive as a place to live, work, and visit—something that directly supports thousands of jobs in our tourism industry.

I've reviewed the materials, talked with people who know the project well, and looked at the community engagement that's been going on. From what I've seen, Kaawanui has been planned with respect for Kaua'i's culture, environment, and people. I believe it's a good fit for our island.

So on behalf of the Kaua'i Chamber of Commerce and the hundreds of businesses we represent, I respectfully urge the Commission to approve the permits so this project can keep moving forward. We need more clean, reliable, affordable energy if we're going to build the resilient economy our community deserves.

Mahalo for your time and for the careful work you do on behalf of all of us. I'm happy to answer any questions or talk more if it would be helpful.

Seann Hartnell  
President and CEO

Kaua'i Chamber of Commerce

808-652-9045

[seann@kauaichamber.org](mailto:seann@kauaichamber.org)

## Kenneth Estes

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**From:** Planning Department  
**Sent:** Monday, March 2, 2026 8:50 AM  
**To:** Kenneth Estes; Shanlee Jimenez  
**Subject:** FW: Support for Ka'awanui Solar

**From:** Jeremiah Obrero <jeremiahobrero@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 1, 2026 11:01 AM  
**To:** Planning Department <planningdepartment@kauai.gov>  
**Subject:** Support for Ka'awanui Solar

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Aloha Chair and Commissioners,

I'm an AES employee and a kauai resident that graduated from Kapaa High School, and I'm writing in support of the Ka'awanui Solar project

Ka'awanui Solar will provide a meaningful amount of clean energy for Kauai. Enough to power more than 16,000 homes and supply roughly 17% of the island's electricity needs. By reducing reliance on imported fuel, This project will help strengthen grid reliability and support more stable energy costs over its 25-year term.

As someone who lives and works on Kauai, I appreciate that this project also supports local jobs, responsible land use, and long-term planning. Ka'awanui Solar includes environmental and cultural reviews, a clear decommissioning plan, and a dual-use approach that allows solar energy production to coexist with agriculture.

This project is an investment in Kauai's energy future and in the community we all call home. I humbly encourage the Planning Commission to consider it favorably.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Jeremiah Obrero

## Kenneth Estes

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**From:** Planning Department  
**Sent:** Monday, March 2, 2026 8:50 AM  
**To:** Kenneth Estes; Shanlee Jimenez  
**Subject:** FW: CLASS IV ZONING PERMIT (Z-IV-2026-12), USE PERMIT (U-2026-9) and SPECIAL PERMIT (SP-2026-4)

**From:** Diedrick Nagle <diedrick.nagle1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 1, 2026 10:09 AM  
**To:** Planning Department <planningdepartment@kauai.gov>  
**Subject:** RE: CLASS IV ZONING PERMIT (Z-IV-2026-12), USE PERMIT (U-2026-9) and SPECIAL PERMIT (SP-2026-4)

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**Aloha Chair and Commissioners,**

**My name is Diedrick, and I am writing to you today in strong support of the Ka'awanui Solar project both professionally and personally.**

**I am the Operations Team Lead for our two currently operating sites on Kauai, Lawai and Kekaha PV+BESS sites, and have had the pleasure of working with my team, local contractors and vendors, as well as leadership at KIUC. These projects have been of great benefit to the island and community.**

**The Ka'awanui Solar project will provide 17.5% Kaua'i's energy needs and is an important step in Kaua'i's transition to locally produced, renewable energy. The project will reduce our reliance on imported fossil fuels, strengthens our energy security and helps provide clean energy at a low, stable, fixed cost to Kaua'i over its 25-year operating period. Additionally, by integrating solar power with agriculture, it promotes efficient land while contributing to our food security.**

**Projects like Ka'awanui Solar also create meaningful local economic opportunities. AES Hawai'i employs Kaua'i residents in skilled jobs that allow us to build longterm careers while continuing to live and raise our families on island. I am proud to contribute to projects that support a skilled workforce and strengthen the community. Our team includes graduates of Kapa'a High School, Waimea High School, and Kaua'i Community College, and I am proud to say we are all working together toward a cleaner and more sustainable energy future for Kaua'i.**

**I am also proud to be part of a team that is committed to developing and operating responsibly. A clear decommissioning plan is in place to ensure that, at the end of the project's life, all facilities are removed and the land is restored. I have worked closely with Omao farms to ensure that our vegetation management plan at Lawai is not only keeping the site looking good, but that the health and biodiversity of the land is not just equal to, but better than the way it was when we began operations in Lawai. The same can be said for the site on PMRF, and with any future site - such as Ka'awanui.**

If you haven't seen already, please feel free to watch the recent Empowered episode, where they interview Myself and KIUC regarding the projects on Kauai. We touch on more about how the projects impact the community, grid-reliability and ecosystem there:)

<https://www.khon2.com/video/empowered-hawai%ca%bbi-kauai-lights-the-way/11554747>

As someone who works daily on solar and battery storage projects and calls Kaua'i home, I believe Ka'awanui Solar offers lasting benefits for our island—improving energy reliability, supporting local jobs, and responsibly stewarding the land. I respectfully encourage the Planning Commission to consider the project favorably.

Mahalo for your time, service, and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Diedrick Nagle  
Operations Team Lead  
AES Hawai'i

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Diedrick Nagle

Team Lead, O&M Kauai, HI (Kekaha & Lawai)

AES Clean Energy

Mobile: 808.346.4897



## Kenneth Estes

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**From:** Planning Department  
**Sent:** Monday, March 2, 2026 8:50 AM  
**To:** Kenneth Estes; Shanlee Jimenez  
**Subject:** FW: Ka'awanui Solar Testimony

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**From:** Keanu Dotario <keanudotario808@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 27, 2026 7:16 PM  
**To:** Planning Department <planningdepartment@kauai.gov>  
**Cc:** carrice.gardner@aes.com  
**Subject:** Ka'awanui Solar Testimony

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### Kaua'i County Planning Commission

**RE: CLASS IV ZONING PERMIT (Z-IV-2026-12), USE PERMIT (U-2026-9) and SPECIAL PERMIT (SP-2026-4) to construct and operate a solar utility facility on lands located on the mauka side of Kaunualii Highway in Makaweli, directly across of the Makawweli Post Office Facility, further identified as Tax Map Keys: (4) 1-7-006:006 (Por.) and 010 (Por.), and containing a project area of approximately 269 acres = KAAWANUI SOLAR LLC.**

Aloha Chair and Commissioners,

My name is Keanu Dotario, and I was born and raised here on Kaua'i. I am writing in strong support of the continued growth of solar energy on our island with the Ka'awanu'i Solar Project. This project represents an important step toward strengthening Kaua'i's commitment to locally produced, renewable energy and reducing our dependence on imported fossil fuels.

As someone who calls Kauai home, I believe investing in solar is investing in our future. Expanding renewable energy helps provide stable, long-term energy costs for our families while protecting the natural beauty and resources that make Kaua'i so special. Projects like this not only improve our island's energy security, but also create meaningful job opportunities for local residents. I for example am blessed to be able to work at our other Kauai sites everyday.

I am especially grateful for the career paths that solar development has opened up for the people of Kaua'i such as myself and my other colleagues who were born and raised on Kauai. These projects allow local workers to build skilled, long-term careers while continuing to live, raise families, and contribute to our community. Renewable energy development strengthens our workforce, supports our local economy, and keeps opportunity here at home.

With responsible planning, clear decommissioning commitments, and a focus on stewardship of the land, solar projects can coexist with our values and our environment. I fully support thoughtful solar growth on Kaua'i and respectfully encourage the Commission to look favorably upon projects that move our island toward a cleaner, more sustainable future.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Keanu Dotario  
AES Hawai'i  
Kaua'i Resident