

Looking beyond propoganda when casting vote for mayor

THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



It is election season, and many are receiving marketing materials with messages from

candidates trying to garner your vote. Sometimes these pieces provide specific accomplishments; however, often the information presented is subjective, which is why we ask residents to go beyond the propoganda and review the candidate's record.

This is critical, particularly with the mayoral race this year, because Maui has been hard hit by the recession and our recovery has been slow. This unprecedented time in history mandated the need for extraordinary leadership, and we feel Mayor Charmaine Tavares has not hit the mark.

An issue first arose when Mayor Tavares took office and canceled standing monthly meetings with organizations like the Maui Chamber of Commerce, Maui Contractors Association and Realtors Association of Maui. These groups were accustomed to having regular meetings with the mayor. It seemed an odd move for someone who considers herself a community collaborator.

Shortly thereafter, transient vacation rentals (TVRs) were shut down, representing a huge economic loss to our community. While the mayor continues to respond that it is important to protect neighborhoods with respect to TVRs and

home-based businesses (HBBs), it is a moot point. All agree. Beyond that we want demonstrated leadership and forward movement on legislation, which protects our neighborhoods and allows appropriate TVRs and HBBs that want to operate legitimately. It is not happening.

A marketing piece by the Tavares campaign says the mayor has done the following actions, shown in boldface type. Yet with these actions, there are important factors, shown in regular typeface, to consider.

• **Secured more federal and private funding.** A phenomenal amount of federal funding was made available with President Obama's Economic Revitalization Act. Compared with other counties in our state, Maui received the smallest amount of economic-stimulus funds.

• **Moved stalled projects forward.** No specifics are provided on why the two projects noted, TVRs and HBBs, were considered "stalled" and what specific actions were taken to address the situation.

• **Preserved construction jobs** by investing more than \$100 million each year in infrastructure. Infrastructure maintenance requires a significant annual investment. If this administration's investment was successful at preserving construction jobs, why are so many union members still sitting on the bench?

• **Fought for Maui County's share of our hotel room tax.** That should be a given. This money is generated here, it replaces state grants in aid,

and our county relies on it.

• **Added 18 more buses.** Under this administration, transportation services were brought in-house that previously had been outsourced to MEO — a nonprofit that better leveraged every dollar, and is well-connected and responsive to the population served.

• **Provided \$30 million for nonprofits.** Maui County has a tradition of supporting nonprofits at similar levels of funding. This is not new.

• **Committed millions toward quick recovery of our visitor industry.** Again, we long have funded the visitor industry at such levels. Yet, for the 2011 budget, the mayor proposed a 10 percent cut in visitor-industry funding, bringing the funding — which already had been decreased the prior year — down further from \$3.3 to \$3 million. She noted that if every program were cut a little, all could be sustained. We do not agree with that rationale. The visitor industry is our economic engine and provides the greatest opportunity for a quick recovery. It should have been a top economic priority, with funding increased, not decreased. With greater investment, we could have received better returns.

It is time to go beyond the propoganda to vision, leadership and solid plans. The Maui Chamber of Commerce endorses Alan Arakawa for mayor. Join us in electing him to office Nov. 2.

■ *Pamela Tumpap is president of the Maui Chamber of Commerce.*