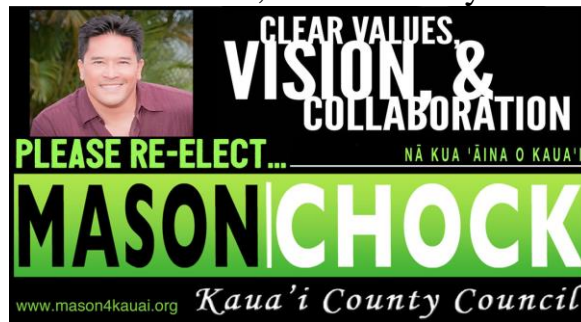


## =HOTELPAC – 2020 Candidate Questionnaire (County)

### Responses for Mason Chock, Kauai County Council Candidate



#### 1) The future of tourism in Hawai'i

Despite tourism's status as one of our state's top economic drivers, the COVID-19 pandemic has led some to call for our economy to diversify away from tourism. HLTA's longstanding position has been that our economy should look to diversify within tourism, i.e., develop and expand industries that complement tourism. Would you support this policy given the challenge of identifying industries that could immediately replace the number of jobs and revenue tourism generates for our state's economy? If not, what are your proposals for diversification?

*Yes, I have also received this sentiment from many and while I am an advocate of supporting diversification, I am confident that tourism will always play a large role in our economy. In short, despite the current situation, I don't think the visitor industry is going away and so it behooves us to mold tourism into everything we aspire to have it be. In order to preserve the beauty and way of life in Hawaii, we must focus on the quality of visitors we are investing in by means of how they can contribute to the perpetuation of our culture and place. Also, I believe sustainable agriculture is a direct tie into our visitor industry as well as protection of our pristine resources.*

#### 2) Tourism Management

HLTA has long maintained that we believe in the "quality" tourism model rather than the "quantity" tourism model. Effective execution of this responsible management model takes many forms, one being the establishment of user impact fees at popular visitor attractions such as O'ahu's Hanauma Bay. Do you support user impact fees? Do you have other ideas that would embrace this model?

*I do support impact fees for visitors. I have been working on establishing parking fees at our county beaches and parks as well as shuttle expansion within resort corridors to more effectively move our visitors from place to place. I also, believe protected regions need to be identified so limitations can be set on the number of visitors to these areas which should ultimately be managed by way of permit.*

#### 3) Real Property Tax

Hotels and lodgings historically have been among the highest real property taxpayers in all counties, paying from \$10.70 to \$13.90 per \$1,000 of assessed value. In FY2019-2020 alone, hotels were seven of the top ten taxpayers based on the amount of taxes levied. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hotels have already come due on one installment of real property taxes, even though many of them have not generated revenue since March. As our industry looks to recover from the pandemic, will you oppose any increase in real property taxes over the next three years? Five years?

*My goal is to not increase any property taxes in the next budget until businesses can get back on their feet, however, this determination is relative to the shortfalls our county will undoubtedly experience and we must retain basic needs such as public health and safety. So much will be dependent on our forthcoming federal and state government decisions in the next few months. If property taxes need to be considered, the transient vacation rental class will be the first on my list.*

#### 4) Transient Vacation Rentals

HLTA's position has always been one of fairness, i.e., legal TVRs such as those on AirBnB or VRBO should be allowed to operate in areas that have been zoned for resorts so long as the property owner pays the real property taxes associated with a resort property, as well as the GET and TAT. Where do you stand on this issue? Would you support a measure to increase enforcement to rein in the proliferation of properties that are operating illegally? Moreover, would you support an increase in the amount of the fine assessed to illegal operators?

*TVRs decimate our housing market and completely change the character of our neighborhoods. Kauai county has done an extremely good job of enforcement on illegal activity within the last few years. This past term the council passed the most stringent enforcement parameters in the state increasing fines and providing a means to place property liens on the most chronic, non-compliant offenders.*

#### 5) Homelessness Solutions

In recent years, HLTA has dedicated significant time and resources to address homelessness in our community. In addition to funds generated through our Visitor Industry Charity Walk, we secured \$1 million in State matching funds that we used to subsidize the efforts of homeless service providers around the state. Please provide a detailed description of an initiative that you would implement to address homelessness in your county.

*First, I want to thank the HLTA on the partnership in addressing this pressing issue. Public private partnerships is in my opinion, the only way we will truly have a shot of succeeding. I am a huge advocate of "Housing First," and have been very active in securing our first long term transitional housing project with wrap around services in Lihue called Ke Alaula. We have enlisted Women in Need as the managing agency to coordinate with Kauai Economic Opportunity, our Housing Agency, Mental Health Services as well as employment and childcare partners. My aim is to duplicate this model in the west and east moku and transition our houseless populations out of our parks and on the pathway to stability.*

## 6) Sustainability in the Visitor Industry

Hawai'i's visitor industry has gone to great lengths to make its businesses more "green" and eco-friendly. What government incentives would you propose or support to help our industry bolster these initiatives?

*As mentioned, I am an advocate of regional shuttles that can serve as a win-win for Kauai. The North Shore shuttle is such example that if successfully implemented can increase the quality of life for residents while providing a hassle free and convenient means of transportation to sought after visitor destinations while decreasing our carbon emissions significantly. Establishment of a business improvement district can duplicate this model in visitor areas such as the Royal Coconut Coast and Poipu alleviating the increased traffic issues we have experienced I recent years. I have also been responsible for increasing our county composting processing capacity and banning harmful materials such as polystyrene. I supported our county climate change plans as well as transitioning towards an electrical bus fleet.*

## 7) Visitor Industry Health, Safety & Security Standards

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread throughout our state, it became clear that establishing health and hygiene standards would be critical to restoring trust in our industry. As such, we developed the HLTA Health, Safety & Security Standards. These were created after reviewing the latest information from the CDC, WHO, and EPA, as well as input from industry stakeholders. Our standards were submitted to the State Department of Health for its review. After receiving DOH approval, we shared our standards with the governor, HI-EMA, State Attorney General, and all the mayors. Please answer yes or no: Would you support the adoption of our standards as statewide policy for lodging properties? If not, please explain.

*Yes, I would support adoption of as well as an expansion of these standards that would go farther into ensuring Hawaii is the safest location to travel to. Until we can establish this gold standard, people will continue to fear travel, so we must do everything within our power to bring the numbers of covid-19 down. In my opinion, this may require going farther than CDC and WHO standards to ensure stringent testing, quarantine and contact tracing programs are in place.*

## 8) Public Safety

To date, HLTA has held two highly successful Visitor Public Safety Conferences on O'ahu. These conferences have brought together hotel management, security professionals, lawmakers, law enforcement, social service providers, and other stakeholders to discuss possible solutions to issues such as late-night cabarets and the need for more security cameras throughout Waikiki, the homeless population in Chinatown, and a spike in shoplifting around the island. Each conference led to significant progress in addressing these community issues.

Neighbor Island Candidates Only: Would you support HLTA in convening a Visitor Public Safety Conference in your county in 2021? If so, what specific public health and safety issues would you like to see discussed?

*Sure, depending on how we progress through this pandemic and with proper safety protocols in place, I would support this. I would like to see a discussion on the use of Business Improvement Districts or other funding mechanisms implemented on Kauai to address the homeless issues in the visitor destination areas along the walking pathway and public areas.*

O'ahu Candidates Only: For O'ahu's third Visitor Public Safety Conference, to be held in 2021, what specific public health and safety issues would you like to see discussed?

9) If elected, what do you hope to accomplish during your first year in office, which will undoubtedly be one of the most challenging and difficult times the state and counties have ever faced.

*Health and safety balanced with financial and economic stability for the county and our residents. To accomplish this, I want to build resources towards and follow through on the Kauai Economic Recovery Strategic Team recommendations as well as respond to emerging gaps we experience as an island as the pandemic continues to run its course.*

10) Please share with us one fun fact about yourself.

*I am the President of an exciting non-profit called Malama Huleia dedicated to the revitalization of the Huleia watershed and restoration of Alekoko Fishpond. Our hope is to one day feed the community from this resource. It might sound like more work than fun, but it has been a lot of fun for me!*