



ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

A Prolific Visitor Public Safety Conference

Aspate of headlines about crime in the islands prompted Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, along with a spectrum of public safety partners, to call our first-ever Visitor Public Safety Conference.

After months of planning, our efforts came to fruition in February at the Sheraton Waikiki as more than 200 stakeholders from government, the visitor industry, law enforcement, business, armed services and community came together to share our mana'o in a lively exchange of perspectives and ideas.

Waikiki area Councilman Trevor Ozawa and I hosted the successful event.

We heard from public safety leaders, including Honolulu Chief of Police Susan Ballard and Prosecuting Attorney Keith Kaneshiro. Chief Ballard reaffirmed HPD's strong focus on the safety of visitors and residents, and suggested barring cabaret liquor licenses that allow Waikiki estab-

lishments to operate until 4 a.m. Prosecutor Kaneshiro spoke about congestion in our courts and how it leads to a revolving door for criminals, and presented a strong argument for more prison beds.

The conference had four panels outlining the challenges facing public safety. In the law enforcement arena, which covered homelessness and drug trafficking, experts brought to light an issue plaguing law enforcement and businesses in Waikiki, i.e., the under-reporting of crimes. First Deputy Prosecutor Chasid Sapolu and HPD acting Capt. Eric Yosemite emphasized that victims of crime need to be more willing to report and testify.

The panel on crimes against visitors called for an increase in police presence in Waikiki. Longtime Waikiki commander and now HPD Deputy Chief John McCarthy offered valuable insights and reiterated his chief's suggestion that there needs to be a

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serious discussion on cabaret establishments that dispense alcohol until the early morning. Jessica Lani Rich explained how the Visitor Aloha Society of Hawai'i helps a tourist who has been a victim of an unfortunate incident. Hawai'i Hotel Visitor Industry Security Association's Jerry Dolak recommended more HPD foot patrols, more security cameras, more businesses willing to report trespassing criminal offenders, more stores and restaurants willing to prosecute, and more ways to notify the police outside the 911 system.

A lunch session featured HPD acting Maj. Jay Trinidad and members of the Army and Navy. They called for more dialogue and communication be-

tween businesses, HPD and the military. It was encouraging to hear the military is very open to receiving our input and suggestions on dealing with some of the more sensitive issues with respect to tourism.

We closed the conference with experts in the field of youth and juvenile reform. Panelists discussed issues involving the physical, social and psychological dynamics feeding juvenile crime. Acting Maj. J. Pedro talked about HPD programs that work well with young people, such as the Police Activities League, while First Circuit Court Judge Mark Browning spoke on the woefully deficient mental health resources available for at-risk youth. Adult Friends for Youth's Debo-

rah Spencer-Chun touched on the need to address the problems of young people in groups, as opposed to individually servicing them because they tend to regress into criminal habits through gangs and peer pressure. Wahiawa Storefront School's Colette Kajiwarra expressed the need to do more in combating the proliferation of drug use.

The conference was just the first step in an ongoing process. At our first follow-up meeting, immediate action by our Visitor Public Safety Steering Committee will include building on the open communication and rapport developed with the military branches on all aspects of tourism, particularly relating to Waikiki. We will develop a strong, proactive educational outreach program, with the prosecutor's office as the lead, to get more businesses and individuals to make reporting crime a priority. Various incentives were explored because underreporting is a major concern of HPD.

We plan to discuss with cabaret licensees the momentum developing in the community to curtail the sale of alcohol after 2 a.m., given the rash of incidents occurring after that hour. Coupled with chronic complaints about noise, it would behoove these businesses to come forward with their ideas to assure HPD and the community that they recognize the status quo is unsatisfactory. There was also a call for meetings with City Council and administration officials to request timely action on infrastructure and public safety improvements, key legislation, and additional funding requests. And finally, we look to encourage more private and public funding support for nonprofit youth groups and government agencies in their quest to steer our young people to more productive lifestyles.

Stay tuned in the months to come on the progress we will be making.

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