

Economic recovery still top of mind

THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



In discussions from the White House down to our dinner tables at home, economic recovery remains top of mind. There is a clear understanding that challenges are widespread and neither limited to one industry or one country, nor as short term as we would have hoped; that we are all affected; and that we all must work together to turn these challenging times around.

Strong plans are required not merely for the next year, but for the next several years, just to get beyond the current economic issues we face. The times call for solid plans and a new playbook so our team can strengthen our economy now and carry forward with renewed prosperity.

To help us get there, our state Executive Branch has developed the Hawaii Economy Five-Point Plan, an economic agenda that includes:

- Increasing tourism outreach and marketing.
- Investing in infrastructure

and making capital improvements.

- Lowering business fees and providing tax relief.
- Attracting outside investment, especially in renewable energy and technology.
- Maximizing federal dollars and partnerships.

The plan is extensive, and efforts are already under way. In the area of tourism, for example, the governor and lieutenant governor made separate trips to Asia to promote travel to Hawaii, meet with top leaders in the Asia visitor industry, seek increases in flights from Asia, and expand opportunities for business investments and partnerships. Their stops included Korea, Japan, Taiwan and China. The trips were among many actions toward increasing tourism outreach and marketing.

A small group made up of business, government, labor and nonprofit leaders met in Honolulu on Nov. 7 to learn more about the Hawaii Economy Five-Point Plan and brainstorm ways to support the plan.

As they discussed the plan, it was clear that state government action alone was not sufficient to implement such an aggressive economic-stabilization package. All sectors of the state commu-

nity need to participate — including our elected officials at both the county and state level, our congressional delegation at the federal level, businesses, labor and government — to make this plan a reality. We must remove party and politics from the equation because broad cooperation by all is vital to moving this substantial economic and community agenda forward. Therefore, it was recommended that a follow-up meeting should be convened to more fully engage important stakeholders who have the wherewithal to expedite and implement the Five-Point Plan.

In response, several organizations joined to discuss a Hawaii Economic Stabilization Initiative, a joint-sector initiative to address economic challenges our state will face over the next two or three years. The organizations included the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, of which the Maui Chamber of Commerce is part; the Economic Development Alliance of Hawaii; Hawaii Alliance for Nonprofit Organizations; Hawaii Department of Business Economic Development and Tourism; and the Hawaii Institute for Public Affairs.

This group of key business,

government, labor and nonprofit leaders — who have the power, authority and capacity to accelerate and put Hawaii's Five-Point Plan into action — met this week to:

- Review the Hawaii Economy Five-Point Plan.
- Hear about county-level plans.
- Identify priority actions to accelerate and execute components of the Five-Point Plan.
- Develop timelines, determine responsible entities, and decide on how results of implementing actions will be monitored.

This is a work in progress. Please stay tuned for more reporting on the Hawaii Economy Five-Point Plan, the Hawaii Economic Stabilization Initiative, and progress made.

Mayor Charmaine Tavares also announced this week her support for the "Main Street Recovery" plan proposed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The plan calls for emergency federal funding for "ready to go" infrastructure projects in our nation's cities and towns in the first 100 days of the administration of President-elect Obama.

A list of 58 projects with a total value of \$200 million has been developed. The County of

Maui has submitted a preliminary funding request for these projects, which fall within six different areas: public-safety technology, water and wastewater, highways, transit, energy, and Community Development Block Grants. An updated request with additional projects is expected to be submitted early next week.

"Investing in projects that will generate jobs, support small businesses, stimulate our economy and strengthen our infrastructure would pay immediate benefits throughout the country and throughout Maui County," Mayor Tavares said. The list presented thus far provides for significant job creation and would be of great help to our community if funded.

Efforts to stimulate our economy, protect and create jobs, and support residents are needed on all fronts. Working together, we can and will make it through this serious economic crisis; build solid plans to safeguard our community while moving forward; and position ourselves for economic, environmental and social health in a 21st-century global economy.

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