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**ADMINISTRATIVE STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING
HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY
Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.**

Virtual Meeting

MINUTES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT:	James McCully (Chair), Leah Belmonte, Mericia Palma Elmore
MEMBER NOT PRESENT:	Lisa Paulson
NON-VOTING MEMBERS:	Troy Lazaro, Danny Ojiri
HTA STAFF PRESENT:	Caroline Anderson, David Uchiyama, Darlene Morikawa, Dede Howa, Donna K., Jennifer Bastiaanse, Scott Pauli, Trishia Mendoza, Lindsay Sanborn, Carole Hagihara
LEGAL COUNSEL:	John Cole

1. Call to Order

Chair McCully called the meeting to order at 10:14 a.m.

2. Roll Call to Announce Name of Participating Board Members and to Identify Who Else is Present with Board Member if Location is Nonpublic

Mr. Uchiyama conducted the roll call, and members confirmed their attendance, except for Member Paulson, who was excused. Chair McCully also recognized that the non-voting Members, Lazaro and Ojiri, were present at the meeting.

3. Approval of Minutes of the January 20, 2026, Administrative Standing Committee Meeting

Member Elmore proposed a motion to adopt the minutes, and Member Belmonte seconded it. The motion was carried unanimously.

4. Discussion and/or Action Regarding the Bylaws of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority

Chair McCully asked whether members had been able to review the modified version of the bylaws, and Mr. Uchiyama pointed out that the most recent change was the name change of the Film Tourism Standing Committee (FTSC), as well as a revision of its mission statement, as shown in Article V, Section 6.

As Chair of the FTSC, Member Elmore confirmed that the FTSC had approved a minor change to the mission statement to better comport with the title of the committee.

Chair McCully asked whether there was any further discussion on this issue, and, hearing none, he stated that the matter would be brought to the full Board for approval. The Chair called for a motion to approve the latest draft of the bylaws.

Member Elmore proposed the motion, and it was seconded by Member Belmonte. Mr. Uchiyama conducted a roll-call vote, and the motion was carried unanimously.

There was no input from online participants.

5. Finalized Job Description for the HTA President and CEO

Chair McCully asked whether members had been able to review this material, noting Mr. Uchiyama's major involvement in drafting it.

Mr. Uchiyama stated that the job description had been reviewed by the Human Resources (HR) Division of the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) but had not yet been reviewed by Deputy Attorney General Cole.

Mr. Uchiyama explained that in the revised job description, emphasis had been placed on the Relationships and Transparency category, which was assigned 55% of the total value. He noted that this was a major difference from the previous job description, which incorporated all the CEO's defined duties as 95% of the value, with 5% assigned to other duties the CEO might be asked to undertake. Mr. Uchiyama pointed out that changes to the responsibilities of the HTA made the CEO's responsibilities regarding the State

government, the Advisory Board of Directors, relations with the community and industry, public relations, and the procurement process most important. Mr. Uchiyama noted that responsibilities such as contract negotiation, understanding accessibility, direction of studies, program and resource management, and program evaluation were assigned 40% of the value, with 5% assigned to the CEO's remaining duties. He added that DBEDT had agreed with these revisions.

Chair McCully called for discussion, noting that the job description was fundamental to the CEO search. He reminded members that in the course of the earlier search conducted by Bishop & Co., candidates had been provided with the previous job description. However, with the revision of Statute 201-B, the status of the HTA had now changed.

Member Elmore expressed her thanks to the hardworking HTA staff for their explanation and organization of the tasks under the 55% category, and she believed that this revision accurately reflected the previous discussions of the Administrative Standing Committee (ASC), especially regarding relationships. Member Elmore was aware of the importance of transparency and of the necessity for HTA to earn the trust of their tourism partners and the people of Hawai'i.

Member Belmonte echoed Member Elmore's thanks to Mr. Uchiyama and his team for compiling this job description. She noted that this had been discussed in the CEO-Search Permitted Interaction Group (PIG), adding that the items in Section III, Major Duties and Responsibilities, under Administrative Management, had been reordered.

Mr. Uchiyama confirmed that in the latest draft, procurement had been reduced to the lowest priority, and Member Belmonte responded that she was simply checking that the recommendations of the PIG had been incorporated.

Chair McCully commented that he was not sure whether the order of items under Administrative Management reflected a prioritization of the CEO's duties, but he believed that this was to be inferred. He added that if he were to subdivide the 55% for Administrative Management, he would allocate half of that value to #1. Given that this job description was intended to guide discussions in the CEO-Search PIG, it was important to consider how PIG members would begin evaluating individuals and what the paramount characteristic of the future CEO would be.

Member Elmore agreed that #1 was the first priority and should be the major part of the 55%.

AG Cole suggested that if the Board felt that #1 was the first priority, this should be clearly stated. The AG asked about the significance of the “[1]” after each paragraph of the job description.

Ms. Hagihara clarified that [1] was a footnote reference denoting an essential function of the CEO, and Mr. Uchiyama pointed out that the meaning of the footnote was given under the heading “Essential Functions.”

With no further comments from committee members or online participants, Chair McCully called for a motion.

Member Belmonte proposed a motion to approve the revised CEO job description, and Member Elmore seconded it. Mr. Uchiyama conducted a roll-call vote, and the motion was carried unanimously.

6. Discussion of Compensation for the HTA President and CEO

Chair McCully suggested, and Mr. Uchiyama agreed, that these agenda items were to be discussed in Executive Session.

AG Cole asked for the justification for entering Executive Session, and Mr. Uchiyama suggested that the discussion of the compensation and benefits for the HTA CEO, as well as the recruitment timeline, be covered in a single item to be discussed in Executive Session.

AC Cole responded that these matters did not fall within any of the exceptions that permitted a committee to enter Executive Session. Although one of the exceptions related to hiring or evaluation of an employee, this was due to privacy considerations for the particular individual concerned. Another exception related to consultation with the Board’s attorney, but this also applied only to certain issues. AG Cole did not believe that the matters to be discussed should be considered confidential.

Chair McCully responded that he now understood this agenda item would be discussed in open session and asked for any public testimony or questions online regarding compensation.

Mr. Uchiyama stated that the Governor had determined the salary of the HTA President/CEO would fall below that of the Lieutenant Governor, which was currently \$216,660. Other benefits would be a State employee’s standard benefits in terms of

holidays, vacation, sick leave, health benefits, and retirement program, with contributions made by the employee.

Chair McCully stated that most of this was quantifiable in terms of its monetary value, but other benefits were less quantifiable, since the employee could choose among multiple health plan options with varying costs, and this could be related to prior allegiance or investment in a particular plan.

Mr. Uchiyama responded that a worksheet on the website of the Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD) related a list of possible benefits to monetary compensation. For example, with the selection of HMSA and Hawai'i Dental Service, the worksheet indicated that the employee's contribution would be about \$43,000, while the total package, including benefits, would be about \$333,000. Adding the vacation and sick leave component would increase the total compensation to about \$370,000. Mr. Uchiyama added that this calculation was based on a two-person family using the services he had specified. This explanation was intended only to provide a rough idea, since the successful candidate would make their own selection of health and dental services.

Chair McCully asked Mr. Uchiyama to explain what he meant by total compensation and benefits amounting to about \$333,000, and which benefits out of salary, paid leave, holidays, health benefits, and the retirement program were included in the phrase "compensation and benefits."

Mr. Uchiyama responded that the \$333,000 comprised salary, healthcare, and pension, with healthcare including medical, dental, and vision care.

In response to a question from Chair McCully about how the figure could increase to \$370,000, Mr. Uchiyama stated that the \$370,000 figure included vacation time and sick leave.

Chair McCully commented that this implied paid leave and holidays had a value of about \$37,000, and Mr. Uchiyama added that the actual amount would depend on the candidate's preferences and family size.

Chair McCully stated that this was about 23% more than the compensation specified in the 2024 Bishop & Co. search, remarking facetiously that if this were the best job someone would ever have, the HTA might not want to hire that person. The Chair believed the compensation was central to whether the search would be limited to the applications already received, noting that another unknown was legislative activity on various bills to be heard during the current session. Chair McCully believed the issue

required discussion because it formed a material basis for the appointment of a new CEO/President. He added that no vote was required on this issue, as it was information presented by HTA staff.

7. Timeline for Processing a State Employee for the CEO Position

Chair McCully explained that the CEO-Search PIG had discussed the process, and he believed that, now that the job description had been reviewed, the vetting of the original applicants would take place in March with either virtual or in-person interviews. The Chair commented that either the PIG would narrow the finalists or reopen the application process. If the process were reopened, the position would have to be reposted, applications would be received, and applicants would then be narrowed down, extending the timeline into July. The same pattern would then be followed in August, when applicants would be vetted through in-person or virtual interviews, and the Advisory Board would review the finalists recommended by the PIG. This meant that in October, the Board would recommend a candidate to the Governor, who would, in turn, present that person to the Senate, implying that the process would continue into November.

In reply to Chair McCully's request for members' comments, Member Elmore stated that the schedule the Chair had presented was realistic. Chair McCully reminded non-voting members that they were welcome to participate in the discussion at any time.

Chair McCully informed members that two days previously, he and Ms. Anderson had been present at the Legislature at the same time. Ms. Anderson had appeared before the Economic Development and Tourism Committee (EDTC) chaired by Sen. DeCoite, and questions had been directed to her about the CEO search timeline. Ms. Anderson had requested input from Chair McCully, who is the Chair of the CEO-Search PIG.

Several EDTC members questioned Chair McCully, and Sen. Kim, in particular, stated that she believed the HTA was moving too slowly. Sen. Kim had heard speculation that either the search would be reopened or that someone in mind was not on the existing short list. Chair McCully had informed EDTC members that the HTA was proceeding on a careful, deliberate schedule and that it was important for all steps to be correctly executed.

The Chair had become aware that Sen. Kim believed the HTA should move more quickly to appoint someone, even in the face of legislative bills to be discussed in May or June 2026 proposing to eliminate the Authority. Chair McCully had informed the senator that the Advisory Board would not be comfortable with such a course of action. Consequently,

the timeline needed to be defensible in the face of questions from legislators. The Chair pointed out that once the Governor nominated a candidate for the CEO position, possibly in October 2026, that individual would serve as the Acting CEO while awaiting the advice and consent of the full Senate, either in a Special Session or during the 2027 Session.

Member Elmore asked whether Chair McCully believed there was sentiment in the Senate to conduct advice and consent before the end of the present legislative session and commented that she felt that would be too fast.

Chair McCully responded that he had realized that the Senate would have preferred the Advisory Board to have nominated a CEO before the conclusion of the session, but he believed legislators now understood that this was unlikely. The Chair suggested that legislators might have believed it would have been better to move the timeline back to September 2025, but that had not been possible. Legislators appeared to believe that if the process had begun in September 2025, much more progress would have been achieved by now.

In response to a rhetorical question as to whether the Advisory Board was moving as fast as possible, Chair McCully stated that the answer was “possibly not,” but his conviction was that the Advisory Board was moving at a reasonable speed.

Member Elmore agreed with the Chair’s analysis and noted that, because the fundamental nature of the HTA had changed by statute and the CEO position had changed accordingly, there had been no choice for the Advisory Board but to act as they did. Member Elmore considered it unfair to recruit a person for a job that differed from the post for which they had applied and stated that she was comfortable defending the established schedule.

Member Belmonte agreed and believed the timeline was reasonable, stating that it was important to be fair to the candidates in light of all that was anticipated during the present legislative session.

There were no comments from non-voting members or from members of the public.

Chair McCully stated that they would now discuss the timeline for processing a State employee for the CEO position.

Mr. Uchiyama explained that the selected candidate would be processed like a regular State employee, noting that some of the requisite steps had already been completed. A request had already been made to the Governor, and approval had already been granted. This was followed by a request for personnel action, which allowed the vacancy to be

posted immediately. Mr. Uchiyama added that the collection of applications and the conduct of interviews would be followed by the post-interview review and reference checks, which typically require some time. He believed the process would be expedited for a position at this level, though it would likely still require one to two weeks.

Mr. Uchiyama stated that once these background checks had been completed and the criminal record reviewed, a conditional offer would be made, followed by a final offer of employment that includes all elements applicable to a State employee.

Member Belmonte asked Mr. Uchiyama to clarify, noting that the conditional offer was usually made before the background check. Mr. Uchiyama explained that the background check was conducted before the conditional offer, then corrected himself, stating that the conditional offer was made *before* the criminal history check was conducted.

In reply to a question from Chair McCully as to whether all of this was done before the Senate's advice and consent, Mr. Uchiyama assented, noting that no name would be forwarded to the Senate until there was a final offer of employment and a proposed stipend.

Chair McCully asked whether this was a three-week process, and Mr. Uchiyama responded that it was usually a three- to four-week process, but he believed it could be expedited to one to two weeks because of the position's level.

In response to a question from Chair McCully about whether the nominee would be provided with this timeline, Mr. Uchiyama stated that the applicants had not been provided with the timeline, but that they had all been updated on the process to be followed by the PIG. Applicants had been informed that the job description had been revised in accordance with the new role of the HTA, and that once approved by the Board, it would be sent to applicants for their information. Mr. Uchiyama added that the prospective timeline could also be provided.

Chair McCully asked whether it was common for this type of information to be released to applicants, and Mr. Uchiyama responded that the job description was usually issued. The benefits package was available on the DHRD website, and applicants could be directed to it because it was publicly accessible. Mr. Uchiyama believed that the timeline would not normally be issued.

Chair McCully assented that he believed it would be inappropriate to release the CEO selection timeline to the applicants. However, he believed it would be appropriate to forward the timeline to the subject-matter chairs in the Legislature. The Chair added that

he would work with Mr. Uchiyama to compile an information packet to be provided to the subject-matter chairs.

There was no testimony or comment from the online public.

Chair McCully stated that this item was informational and did not require a vote.

The Chair noted that he should have mentioned during the discussion of the previous minutes that a report on the recruitment of the Chief Stewardship Officer had been requested. Mr. Uchiyama stated that an update on positions for which approval had been granted and were being processed was provided during the previous meeting. He added that this would be included in the CEO report for the Advisory Board's next meeting.

As a point of personal privilege, Chair McCully shared with the committee that he wished his wife a happy birthday on February 25, 2026. Other committee members echoed these good wishes, although the Chair assured the committee that his wife was not watching the proceedings.

Member Elmore commented, in relation to the Chief Stewardship Officer update request, that she had noticed that in the agendas of some boards and commissions, there was a routine provision, before adjournment, for new business.

AG Cole explained that regulations required agenda items to be fairly specific, although he was aware that some committees had provision for “old business” and “new business.” He also understood that some boards offered agenda items for public input, but that boards were typically not permitted to raise or discuss items not on the agenda.

Chair McCully commented that there were concerns that a “new business” agenda item could be a Trojan horse that would allow discussion of any issue without it being subject to the Sunshine Law or to public notice of the agenda. He asked AG Cole whether “old business” as an agenda item would be more palatable.

AG Cole responded that, in Advisory Board meetings, members had the opportunity to ask the CEO about any issue for which the CEO was responsible, and these might be issues mentioned in the CEO report but not referred to in the verbal summary.

Chair McCully thanked AG Cole for his advice and thanked Member Elmore for raising this topic.

8. Adjournment

Chair McCully declared the meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m., and Mr. Uchiyama closed the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sheillane Reyes".

Sheillane Reyes
Recorder