

Governor’s Military Advisory Committee on Army-Leased Lands

December 22, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Governor Josh Green

Mahina Paishon

First Lady Jaime Green

Summer Sylva

William Ailā

Kali Watson

Ryan Kanaka’ole

Noe Noe Wong-Wilson

Kūhiō Lewis

Scott Glenn

Laurie McAllister Moore

I. Welcome and Roundtable Introductions

The meeting opened with introductions, reviewed logistics, and confirmed that the discussion would be conducted under a modified version of Chatham House Rules, with minutes drafted to summarize themes, considerations, and areas of discussion without attribution to individual participants. This approach supports candid dialogue balanced with accurate public documentation of the committee’s work.

The advisory committee reaffirmed that its role is consultative and advisory, intended to support informed executive consideration through shared analysis, collective discussion, and reflection of community perspectives. Members emphasized that the committee does not serve as a decision-making body, but rather as a forum for developing insight, identifying issues, and surfacing considerations to inform subsequent executive action.

Members also acknowledged that, due to the real time nature of ongoing discussions, executive action may need to occur as a part of managing external interactions and are not intended to replace committee discussions or input.

II. Goals and Responsibilities of the Committee

Members discussed the formation of the advisory committee. It was noted that long-standing military land lease issues were brought into sharper focus by an unusually accelerated timeline initiated by the U.S. Army, which sought to resolve major lease questions on a timeframe that did not allow for meaningful community input or careful consideration by the State.

Members discussed that this rapid federal push made clear the need for a more deliberate and inclusive process, particularly given the deep cultural, historical, and environmental significance of the lands involved. The committee's creation was described as a response to that pressure, intended to slow the pace where possible and ensure that decisions affecting Hawai'i's lands are informed by community perspectives, especially those of Native Hawaiians.

The committee discussed its intended role as an advisory body, designed to supplement ongoing executive engagement by creating space for shared understanding, informed dialogue, and integration of community input. Members emphasized that meaningful participation from Native Hawaiian communities and other affected residents is essential to understanding land use priorities, future relationships with the military, and appropriate expectations for stewardship and restoration.

Members discussed the importance of ensuring that the advisory committee is connected to real, ongoing conversations occurring across the state. The committee was described as a mechanism for gathering community input dynamically, reflecting diverse viewpoints, and bringing those perspectives forward in a structured way to inform executive consideration.

The committee identified its core responsibilities as including:

- Gathering and reflecting community input from a broad range of perspectives, with particular attention to Native Hawaiian voices and communities most directly affected by military land use.

- Providing informed analysis on land use considerations, legal pathways, and potential community benefit priorities, including examination of both feasible options and those constrained by legal or practical realities.
- Serving as a forum for coordination and shared understanding, allowing participants to surface questions, clarify information, and discuss emerging concerns without functioning as a decision-making body.

Members acknowledged that, consistent with constitutional and statutory authority, executive action may at times be required independent of advisory committee deliberations, particularly in response to federal deadlines or developments beyond the State's control. At the same time, members emphasized that the committee's role is to provide ongoing input, perspective, and guidance so that executive decisions are informed by the best available understanding of community needs and values.

III. Current Status of Land Retention

The committee discussed the current status of military land retention and the broader context in which these discussions are taking place. Members noted that long-standing issues related to military land leases are now unfolding during a period of unusually fast-moving and uncertain federal activity, with shifting priorities and limited clarity about future federal leadership and direction.

Members discussed that federal officials have expressed a strong interest in maintaining military training in Hawai'i and have indicated that they may pursue unilateral actions if discussions do not move forward on timelines they consider acceptable. While no such actions have occurred, members acknowledged that these statements affect the State's options and the overall negotiating environment.

The committee discussed that, in response, the State has focused on slowing the pace of decision-making where possible in order to allow time for community input, careful legal review, and coordination across state agencies. Members noted that this approach has also involved raising broader concerns with federal counterparts, including impacts to land, culture, the environment, housing, infrastructure, and community well-being.

The group highlighted the impact of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which requires congressional authorization for land condemnation, providing at least a year for further negotiations.

Members discussed that public understanding of the current situation varies widely. Some communications intended to increase transparency and signal urgency have been interpreted by parts of the community as suggesting that decisions have already been made. Members emphasized the importance of clearly communicating what remains undecided and what issues are still under active consideration.

The committee discussed that multiple potential pathways remain under review, including different approaches to lease renewal, modification, extension, or the return of land, as well as the risk of unilateral federal action such as condemnation. While not all pathways may be equally realistic, members emphasized that openly examining and explaining these possibilities is important for both internal planning and public trust.

Members also discussed that Hawai'i's position on military land retention is shaped by a broader relationship with the federal government that extends beyond land issues alone. This includes funding and policy decisions in other areas that could be affected by federal–state relations. Members emphasized that internal division or unclear public messaging could weaken the State's position and increase the risk of unfavorable outcomes across a broad range of interests beyond military land use.

The committee emphasized that the status of military land retention remains unresolved and evolving. No final decisions have been made. Substantial work remains to clarify options and engage communities. Members underscored the importance of maintaining transparency, coordination, and flexibility as discussions continue.

IV. Strategies of Land Retention

The committee discussed a range of strategies for addressing military land retention, emphasizing that no single approach has been decided and that multiple options remain under consideration. Members noted that the purpose of discussing strategies at this

stage is to understand the full landscape of possibilities, clarify risks and tradeoffs, and ensure that community input can meaningfully inform future decisions.

Members discussed that several possible pathways are being examined, including different approaches to lease renewal, modification, extension, or return of land, as well as the potential for unilateral federal action if agreement is not reached. It was emphasized that some pathways may be more realistic than others given federal authority and asserted national security priorities, but that examining all credible options is important for transparency and informed decision-making.

The committee discussed the importance of understanding the State's legal footing under existing leases, including what rights and limitations apply to both the State and the federal government. Members emphasized the need for clearer public explanation of these legal frameworks so communities better understand what options are available, which options face constraints, and why certain outcomes may be difficult to achieve.

Members discussed that strategy is not limited to land tenure alone. Broader considerations include cleanup of unexploded ordnance, environmental restoration, cultural and historic preservation, housing, infrastructure, and long-term impacts to surrounding communities. Members emphasized that progress on these issues should not be treated solely as conditions triggered by lease decisions, but also as opportunities for meaningful action and good-faith effort regardless of final outcomes.

The committee also discussed the role of timing and sequencing. Members noted that creating additional time for analysis and community engagement is itself an important strategic objective, helping to reduce pressure for rushed decisions and allowing for more thoughtful consideration of alternatives.

Members emphasized that effective strategy must account for multiple audiences, including community members, state agencies, and federal counterparts. Clear and consistent messaging was identified as essential to avoid misunderstanding, reduce mistrust, and prevent internal divisions from weakening the State's position.

V. Way Forward - Community Engagement

The committee discussed the importance of a clear, inclusive, and coordinated approach to community engagement as discussions around military land retention continue. Members emphasized that meaningful community input is essential and that engagement efforts should be designed to reach a broad range of voices.

Members discussed plans for a multi-part engagement process intended to provide accessible opportunities for public participation. This includes a combination of in-person open houses held in multiple locations, virtual meetings or webinars to allow for broader access, and smaller stakeholder discussions with community organizations, civic groups, and local governments. Continued use of online tools such as Engage to collect written input was also discussed as an important option for those unable or unwilling to participate in meetings.

The committee emphasized that community engagement should focus not only on land retention questions, but also on related issues such as land use, environmental and cultural impacts, community benefits, and long-term stewardship. Members noted that community perspectives may evolve as more information becomes available, and that engagement should be treated as an ongoing process rather than a one-time event.

Members discussed the importance of clearly communicating the scope and purpose of engagement efforts, including what decisions are within the committee's advisory role and what decisions rest with the executive branch. Clear distinctions between advisory input and executive action were identified as critical to avoiding confusion, misplaced accountability, or frustration within the community.

The committee also discussed the need to coordinate state-led engagement with other efforts that are occurring simultaneously. Members emphasized that the advisory committee's work should complement, not displace, other advocacy and engagement processes, and that transparency and mutual respect are essential. Overall, the committee emphasized that effective community engagement will require clarity, consistency, and good-faith listening.