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Council's argument bearing fruit

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By Michael Levine - The Garden Island

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LIHU'E — The Kaua'i County Council's heated exchange last week, with members Tim Bynum and Lani Kawahara on one side and Chair Kaipo Asing on the other, has begun to change the way the county's legislative body conducts its business.

"Following the landmark council meeting held July 22, 2009 — in which Council Chair Kaipo Asing stated, 'I am willing as chair to work with you to solve the problems.' — changes asked for over two years ago are indeed starting to happen," Bynum and Kawahara wrote on their Web site at kauaiinfo.org. "We are very pleased at this turn of events and appreciate Mr. Asing's decision to allow the changes."

On Monday, Asing issued a memorandum to other council members advising them of a policy flowing from last week's marathon meeting. Under terms of the policy, incoming council documents will be placed in a binder on the council's break room table. Council members seeking copies of those documents were advised to ask staff for assistance.

Documents over 30 days old will be removed from the binder, and large document attachments or confidential documents will be made available for review upon request, Asing wrote in the memo. He said the state Office of Information Practices is being consulted on the policy, and that the final outcome of that consultation could result in changes to the policy on document distribution.

On Tuesday, County Clerk Peter Nakamura sent a memo to all council members informing them that a copy of the July 22 public hearing minutes pertaining to Draft Bill No. 2319 related to shoreline setbacks, were available for review — electronically.

On their Web site, Bynum and Kawahara described Nakamura's memo stating minutes were ready for review as "routine" but added that it marked "the first time they were available in an electronic format."

In an interview during a break between items on Wednesday's Planning Committee agenda, Bynum said he was "thrilled" with the changes.

Earlier in July, a press release from Asing and Vice Chair Jay Furfaro announced the council would begin to post its minutes and other documents on the official county Web site at www.kauai.gov.

Bynum and Kawahara's push to address council members' access to the agenda, the placement of public documents on the county's Web site, equitable and timely circulation of documents, and general access to information came to a head last week with a 16-plus-hour meeting in which the two traded barbs and accusations with Asing and the council discussed the possibility of amending its rules.

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