

Daniel E. Orodenker, Executive Officer
State Land Use Commission
Via e-mail dbedt.luc.web@hawaii.gov

RE: KPAC request for zoning conditions re: LUC docket A16-801

January 31, 2017

Dear Mr. Orodenker:

On behalf of the Advisory Board for KPAC, a State Department of Education, for-credit high school drama program, I respectfully request that the Land Use Commission condition KCC's re-zoning approval upon annual access to its theatre for KPAC's students, to perform their fall production (in November or December) each year, at a sustainable price. The fall production usually runs 4-6 shows; some reasonable technical rehearsal access is necessary in advance of the opening show.

Background: KPAC (Kauai Performing Arts Center), was established in 1987 by the Board of Education as a quasi-magnet school program. It is the DOE's only "Learning Center" on Kauai. There are approximately 29 DOE Learning Centers in Hawaii, focused on drama, robotics, business, world languages, etc. KPAC receives annual funding from the DOE, plus a few small grants. For the DOE's detailed Learning Center Program Guide, please see lc.k12.hi.us/Program%20Guide.docx.

Each year, students from Kauai's three (3) public high schools rehearse together and perform two productions: a "straight play" in December and a full musical production (including a live orchestra) in late April. The high school KPAC students rehearse 4-5 months for each production. So, they rehearse August through December for the fall play; and January through April for the spring musical.

The DOE employs a single teacher-director for KPAC, which, in addition to the high school program, offers a fall middle school program, culminating in separate plays by each of the three (3) public middle schools in December. KPAC is overseen by an advisory board made up of parents, community members, teachers, and students.

How does KPAC benefit our community in general? Each spring, KPAC performs for student field trips its full-length, Broadway musical, at the County of Kauai's War Memorial Convention Hall. The cost per student is \$3. The musical features 35 or so high school performers, a live orchestra, professional costumes, and lighting, and elaborate sets. The musical is also performed two weekends in late April, for the general public. Over 4,000 children and adults attended KPAC's "Beauty and the Beast" musical in April 2015. To view photos, please google, "bringing the magic to life KPAC Kauai."

KPAC saves lives. KPAC is a unique educational program in a number of ways. First, it's the only program on island where students from the three public high schools collaborate on a single project. While sports can create rivals amongst the high schools, KPAC brings these students together for a common purpose. Second, although Kauai has theatre opportunities for youngsters, they usually cost the child

participants hundreds of dollars to participate. In contrast, KPAC is free to its participants. I have been actively involved in KPAC for the past 4 years. I have seen some in KPAC whom I believe would be depressed or drop out of school were it not for the social and dramatic opportunities that KPAC provides. I was fortunate to speak with the late Ron Bright, who ran CPAC at Castle High School, about a year before he passed away. He commented, “These high school drama programs save lives.”

I have personally seen the varied positive experiences that result from KPAC involvement. Many students in KPAC report not being very drawn to athletics, and in KPAC, having finally found a program and peers they connect with (over their love of live performance). My daughter, who is now graduated and in college, was enrolled every semester of high school in KPAC. Her experience in KPAC enriched her high school experience – emotionally, socially, and academically. She performed an entire Shakespeare play, learned about late 19th century England (“The Importance of Being Earnest”) and McCarthyism (“The Crucible”), and made deep friendships with students from other high schools. She also collaborated with very positive adult role models – costumers, makeup artists, and choreographers. She performed with live orchestras, and received top-notch acting instruction. She was fortunate to have been able, as a high school senior, to direct Kapaa Middle School KPAC students in their fall play. She commented that on her verbal SAT test, she was familiar with many of the vocabulary words because she had read them in her KPAC plays. I don’t think I can accurately quantify how KPAC built her problem-solving and public-speaking confidence, but I know it’s significant. I shudder at the thought of her not having had the opportunity to be in KPAC during high school, given that at certain points of her high school years, the school work was not very challenging.

Our request: In November of 2012, KPAC spent \$7,500 to perform 6 shows of its non-musical fall play at the KCC Performing Arts Center. This is a significant portion of KPAC’s annual budget and an unsustainable price for KPAC. When I joined the advisory board in 2013, I sought other performance venues for the fall show. Since then, KPAC has been performing its fall show in a music room on the Kauai High campus. It is a good music room, but not ideal for performance (there is no stage or curtain, seating and lighting has to be manually installed, etc.) The main draw of this room is that it is a free of charge venue for KPAC: it’s economically sustainable, assuming Kauai High continues to allow KPAC to perform in this room (KPAC has struggled over the past few years with the Kauai High administration, to enable the students to perform once a year in this room). KPAC is seeking access to KCC’s PAC in order to give the students in the fall show the opportunity to perform in an actual theatre, at a price sustainable for KPAC.

Please note that some of the DOE drama-based Learning Centers (Castle, Kaimuki, Baldwin high schools) have their own high school theatres. The DOE students in these programs have reliable access to a fully-equipped theatre for rehearsals and performances. In contrast, the students in KPAC do not have regular access to a theatre.

KPAC believes that a reasonable cleaning fee, plus a nominal booking fee, would give these high school students sustainable access to the KCC PAC, and enrich their educational opportunities (by enabling them to perform their fall show in an actual theatre). Please note that the County of Kauai generously allows KPAC to use the War Memorial Convention Hall each April to perform the musical production.

Please also note that KPAC in recent years (after it ceased renting the KCC PAC theatre for its fall show) has been providing afterschool transportation for the Waimea and Kapaa High students to rehearsal at Kauai High. This means that a sustainable fall show venue directly benefits the students – in that their one-way transportation to rehearsal is provided; and participation in the program is *not* dependent upon having parents available during the after school hours to drive to rehearsal.

Please do not hesitate to reach me at tracymurakami@gmail.com, if you have questions or concerns.

Thank you,
/s/ *Tracy Murakami*
Tracy Murakami
Vice President, KPAC Advisory Board

P.S. For an 8-minute, professional quality (“Shining Stars”) documentary on KPAC, please go to <https://vimeo.com/channels/kauaishiningstars/page:7> and take the marker to the 18:10 mark. It’s the video with the front frame of students wearing colorful shirts (May 2013).