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March 22, 2013

The Honorable Ernest Y. Martin, Chair
and Members
Honolulu City Council
530 S. King St., Room 202
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

RE: MM28 – Appointment of George Atta, Chair, Dept. of Planning and Permitting

Aloha, Chair Martin and Councilmembers:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to voice my strong support of Mayor Caldwell's appointment of George Atta as Director of the City and County's Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP).

I have had the good fortune to not only know George but also see first-hand the depth and breadth of his experience and wisdom in urban and community planning. Without question, I believe he is an excellent appointment to this critical leadership position within the City Administration.

I am the senior pastor of New Hope Leeward, a church with more than 5,000 congregation members located in the heart of Waipahu. Under George's guidance during his role as Partner with design/architecture firm, Group 70, our church leadership team explored the range of possibilities for sustaining our organization within this community for decades to come, especially within the context of a sustainable location and facility. As you can imagine, this was a substantive exercise that required our team to evaluate land use, facilities design, relevant city ordinances as well as state and federal guidelines, community impacts and opportunities, and much more.

With this in mind, I respectfully recommend George as DPP Director for two basic reasons.

First, George is highly qualified for the position. He has decades of extensive planning and design experience, including a thorough understanding of how government, businesses, organizations and people can efficiently work together. He has spearheaded planning efforts for a variety of development projects – within the public, private and nonprofit sectors – as I'm sure his resume demonstrates. George's work also has equipped him with skills in managing people and resources, leading negotiations, developing partnerships, communicating with various stakeholder groups, and finding solutions in challenging environments. Moreover during his distinct career, George has attained several planning certifications and actively participated with various professional trade associations and groups to continually strengthen his technical expertise.

Second, George has the appropriate "vision" and motivation for the position. His vision is grounded in his love for our community, his recognition that Honolulu is a special place unlike any other community in the United States, and his down-to-earth, local perspective. George also has earned a reputation of integrity, objectivity, creativity, collaboration, and strategic / long-term thinking. Accordingly, George believes as I do that we as leaders have a responsibility to do what is right in order to sustain a vibrant community for generations to come – and this includes a balanced urban environment that incorporates responsible development and protection of our community's natural beauty and resources. It's important that the DPP Director have within him this strong sense of kuleana and stewardship of our community's natural and built environment; George genuinely possesses and deeply feels this motivating sense of responsibility.

I am confident that if selected as the next DPP Director, George will serve with distinction to ensure that Honolulu will be a model of urban planning and will help guide our community to even greater heights. I therefore support his candidacy and respectfully urge you to appoint him as the City's DPP Director.

With gratitude,

Mike Lwin
Senior Pastor

MISC. COM. 730

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