

From: CLK Council Info
Sent: Tuesday, April 26, 2016 11:45 AM

Subject: Budget Speaker Registration/Testimony
Attachments: 20160426114437_Opposition to Budget Item.docx

~~Speaker Registration~~/Testimony

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Meeting Date (*)	2016-05-04
Council/PH Committee (*)	Budget
Agenda Item (*)	BILL _14_ 2016, CD I
Your position on the matter (*)	Oppose
Representing (*)	Self
Organization	
Do you wish to speak at the hearing? (*)	Yes
Written Testimony	
Testimony Attachment	20160426114437_Opposition to Budget Item.docx
Accept Terms and Conditions (*)	1

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Opposition to Budget Item: "New Hope Church"
26 APR 2015

City Councilmembers;

and other Persons in this room,

I stand before you today as a resident of Waipahu, a citizen of the great State of Hawaii for several years, and a taxpayer, and I am grateful that I am able to speak before you on this matter.

Now, I would like to start simply: I am not a Christian myself, but I grew up in a small town Nowhere, Alabama. I know that many of you may not have heard of that place, and rightly so – but the one thing I remember distinctly about growing up there were the Churches.

As a non-Christian, I can attest to the value of Churches to the religious community. And to their local communities, in most cases. They had downfalls, and upsides, but overall those persons thought they were doing "good" for the community. But this is not a matter of religion, nor belief.

This is strictly a matter of taxes, and State. Namely, my taxes. Your taxes, and everyone else in this room's taxes. And the budget that is currently available to New Hope Ministries.

When I am reading a budget bill that shows, distinctly, a request for \$250,000 for a Mega Church to build a new building – in a region where there are many, many churches already – I begin to feel a little anxious over the priorities of my City.

Keep in mind, I have no problem with them building a new building. My issue is the fact that an organization – a NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION – is attempting to allocate City and State funds to build that building. Which is my money. Which is these citizens of this Island's money. Which is Muslim, Buddhist, Atheist, Wiccan, and even local Hawaiian religious person's money.

Hawaii is one of the most religiously diverse places on this planet, and to do so would be to support one religion over another.

Moreso, the organization that is asking for this money has over 125 different locations across the Pacific Rim, and in Oregon. On my last review of their Non-Profit Filings, make in the millions and whose head – Wayne Cordeiro – files over \$300,000 annually in taxes, and owns multi-million-dollar properties in Real Estate. I, as a SINGLE citizen that is paying for this, own a single car and rent a property for \$1800 a month. I make, more-or-less, around \$10 an hour whenever I work.

And, if I have to remind the City Councilmembers, has a long history of budget snafus. Lawsuits from the Department of Education over skimming money for renting buildings in the past, raking up to \$5.6 MILLION dollars, in which they settled for a mere \$775,000.

And this is just finances I can find in Oahu, from local news resources.

And this isn't even to mention the fact that the Church itself is a Non-Profit Organization in the State of Hawaii, and from the IRS – not to mention filings from other countries they have branches. Which, I should remark, I have no issue with – I simply have an issue with an entity that does not pay taxes, asking for tax-dollars to build their Church.

Going back to when I was younger, I distinctly recall our pastor calling upon his congregation to build their Church. People raised money. They went out and knocked on doors, ran charity drives, and the Pastor himself – if memory recalls – took a serious pay cut. And then, one day, I was standing at a ceremony where the ground was being struck for a brand-new Church. A blessing from above for those in the area, and a work of God to the members there.

If a small-town Church in Nowhere, Alabama can crowd-source it's dreams from its members, I have a difficult time imagining why an organization as large New Hope have issue raising \$250,000 themselves for a new building.

Money which I was paying taxes and hoping to see it used on things that are actually beneficial to the *overall community of these islands* and not just the members of New Life and the Christians that go there.

\$250,000 could be used for things in the overall community much better. That is, by all calculations, the ability to send 165 students to the Community Colleges here for a full year as part-time students, or a half-year as full-time students. It could also, by observation, be used to build more sites for homeless persons and transitional housing for homeless families – since on the proposed budget before you, is ONLY \$125,000.

It could also be used to finally make public bathrooms in Waikiki to align with the board's promises in the previous years when they banned public urination in Waikiki and Chinatown, given no public restrooms available to the general public. It would be nice to be able to find a place to piss without paying and without risking a ticket for a 2 mile stretch.

I will once again summarize my thoughts:

The City is proposing to use taxpayer money from Christians, Muslims, Atheists, Buddhists, and so on,

to give to an entity that has 125 locations across the Pacific Rim, tax-free, that they can allocate resources from,

that has a pastor that makes over \$300,000 annually and owns multi-million-dollar properties across the US,

has a history of financial snafus and skimming,

where there are more pressing issues to be using taxpayer money – to actually help the citizens of Hawaii directly.

And, the worst part is, I will never step a damned foot in that Church. Not out of principle, but because I am not a Christian. I'll never use the proposed four-story-parking-structure. I'll never benefit directly from their congregation's Non-Profit Status, despite how much good they may or may not be doing, or think that they are doing, for this island.

I, on behalf of myself and the non-religious persons of this island that cannot speak today, strongly oppose this budget item and deeply wish that the City Councilmembers find a better use for their citizen's tax money.

Build our community. Do not pad the budget of New Life.