

Associations want to discuss Upcountry school site

By TIMOTHY HURLEY
Staff Writer

WAILUKU — Nine Upcountry community associations have expressed concern about the selected site of a new high school and have requested the presence of public education officials at a meeting Tuesday.

Jocelyn Perreira, president of the Maui County Council of Community Associations, on Friday gave Meyer Ueoka, Maui's representative on the Board of Education, a packet of letters containing the positions of member organizations regarding the high school site.

Perreira said the combined concerns of the Upcountry

associations would seem to merit another look at the school location.

Ueoka could not be reached for comment, but Perreira said the veteran board member agreed to meet with community leaders at Tuesday's Makawao Community Association meeting scheduled for 7 p.m. at the Eddie Tam Complex.

Maui District Superintendent Lokelani Lindsey said Friday she would try to attend the meeting.

Perreira said that while several of the community associations are not happy with the DOE's school site choice at the junction of the Haleakala and Kula highways, none of them wants to jeopardize the project's funding by

halting or delaying it.

Many of the community groups, she said, expressed concern the site selection process "seemed flawed."

"They would like to see if we cannot place the process back on track by allowing community input," she said.

However, Lindsey said Friday that officials are going "full steam ahead," with development of the Haleakala-Kula site so that high school doors can open by September 1994.

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Lindsey defended the site selection process, saying the community had input for three years before the final decision was made. She said perhaps a misconception exists that "the community" is the one that selects the site. That is not correct, she said. The community merely recommends a site; it is the district superintendent's responsibility to choose a site, which then acts as a recommendation to the state superintendent, she said.

Lindsey conceded that the Apana Road site was her preferred site, but then the possibility of delays surfaced after landowner Maui Land & Pineapple Co. registered its objections.

She said it has been her aim all along to ensure the school is built as soon as possible.

"There are 1,100 kids coming down from Upcountry," she said. "The new school is going to be — in the long run — the best thing to happen to this community."

Lindsey said she wants to convey this message to community leaders, and if unable to attend Tuesday's Makawao meeting, she would be willing to speak at the various community association meetings.

On Thursday, two leading proponents of switching the high school site to Apana Road gave up their fight, saying it is time for the community to come together in support of the Kula-Haleakala site.

But Dick Mayer, who led community school site selection efforts for three years, and Alec McBarnet Jr., Maui District School Advisory Council chairman, said they believe the site selection process was subverted.

The high school's environmental impact report and the community at large generally favored the Apana Road site, they noted, only to lose out with a "last-minute switch."

Several community association leaders agreed with Mayer and McBarnet in written comments about the site.

"We think an important public process has been circumvented and we would like to know why," said Phillip Swatek, president of the Olin-da Community Association.

"We don't want to jeopardize the project today but do feel strongly that the site selection process was flawed," wrote Tom Morrow, president of the Haiku Community Association.