

Big Island Weekly

The new energy reality

By Kristine Kubat

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We know, it's The Kohala Center, again.

Might as well get used to it. There's just no getting away from these leaders in the transition to Hawai'i's sustainable future if your mission is to document the trend.

At the center's recent energy forum held at the Hilo Hawaiian Hotel June 6, "Business Challenges, Business Opportunitites and the New Energy Reality" was the focus of the day. The center counted 115 registered participants willing to spend at least part of their day contemplating the topics. Here's a wrap on the day's more outstanding moments.

Turns out the first thing our readers need to know about The Kohala Center's energy forum was the last thing that went down. Why James Koshiba's "Energy commitments that count" got saved for the end is a subject more befitting an editorial. Just know that by the time participants were asked to be the change they wanted to see in the world, many of them were long gone. Koshiba was there on behalf of KANU Hawai'i to extoll the virtues of "island thinking and activism for an island future." He characterized the information that preceded his talk (some of which, in our reversal, follows this article) as "great." He also went on to say that the effort "can't stop with information; it is necessary but not sufficient."



James Koshiba. - Courtesy Kanu Hawai'i

Those who stuck the event out to the bitter end heard Koshiba explain how KANU got started by a group of 40 young people who came together around a simple question. "Almost every plan over the past 30 years said the same thing," he said in reference to the noble and obviously ongoing effort of policy makers to outline Hawai'i's sustainable future. "On one hand it is encouraging, but it begs the question -- 'why are we still talking about it?'"

Koshiba went on to enlist what remained of the audience in the KANU mission by making the case for how "simple steps taken together can have an impact."

Working off a card that was included in the forum packet (those who missed Koshiba's presentation could fill it out and turn it in on their own) he discussed the 17 action items KANU has identified as more meaningful than talk. The group organized them into these four categories -- sustainable transportation, electricity consumption, renewable energy and sustainable material flows. Samples of the actions, in corresponding order, included, "I will use mass transit, I will eliminate incandescent light bulbs from my home or business, I will install a solar water heater on my home or business, and I will recycle all recyclable materials used by my business."

Next to each item was a box the committed could use to indicate if they had already taken the action or if they were making the leap right then and there. The exercise represented a moment of truth for attendees which was heightened by a box on the bottom next to this directive: "Share my commitments via kanuhawaii.org"

After the forum, Toshiba gave this report on the response he received "There was some attrition of the audience toward the end, but about two-thirds of the remaining 50-or-so people committed. And, about half of those chose to make their commitments public."

BIW readers will have to do their own snooping to learn who did and who didn't. "Since we haven't published the names/commitments to the site yet, I don't think I can release them," said Koshiba. "Sorry. They should be up in the next day or so."

Find out who is walking their energy forum talk at kanuhawaii.org