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ARCHIVES

Dee Crowell works toward energy vision

by Amanda C. Gregg - THE GARDEN ISLAND

Posted: Thursday, Mar 08, 2007 - 11:49:08 am HST

Editor's note: Today marks the first of seven profiles of candidates running for the Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative Board of Directors. The candidates are competing to fill three seats made available as three-year terms expire on the nine-man board. The candidates are: Carol Bain, Jim Mayfield, Peter Thielen, Dee Crowell, David Iha, Raymond W. Paler and Allan A. Smith. Ballots were mailed the week of Feb. 25 and voting will close at 4 p.m. March 17. Today, we begin with Dee Crowell.

For Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative incumbent Dee Crowell, experience, vision and a penchant for planning are the three reasons to vote for him in the Board of Directors election, he says.

"As an incumbent, I've had three years working with staff and strategizing on the budget," Crowell said. "I also was on the water board for six years, so I have experience dealing with infrastructure issues and am familiar with the issues involved in providing service to people."

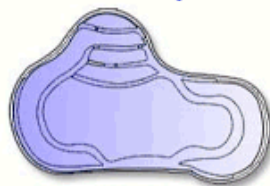
Crowell, an architect and the county's former planning director, is vying for another three-year term on the nine-person board because he has always had an interest in energy, he said.

The voluntary position requires roughly 30 to 40 hours a month.

"It's another form of public service," he said, noting some of his most applicable experience is "dealing with infrastructure issues and knowing its importance."

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"Infrastructure" can relate to power sources, he added.

"We're kind of at the threshold of something new," he said. "We're trying to decrease our dependency on fossil fuels. This will take us in a new direction in the next few years."

Attaining that balance will mean balancing the dependency issues with dependable service to customers.

As an example, Crowell said renewable energy such as wind can be less reliable than electricity.

"But there's a place for that kind of technology, it just needs to be incorporated smoothly in our production."

Though Crowell didn't study alternative energy design while becoming an architect, it is an aspect that caught his attention in the field decades ago, he said.

"For my brother we put in a solar hot water heater almost 30 years ago," Crowell said. "Solar hot water has made sense for a long time."

A way to further such energy-saving ideas would be continuing to focus on incentives, such as the \$800 credit or rebate or the zero interest loans for people putting in solar water heaters.

Such incentives will continue to help not only the environment, but residents' financial bottom line.

"If the cost of fossil fuel keeps going up the way it is, we'd need to be looking at savings," he said. "That's why we're taking a hard look at it now."

The "hard look" Crowell was referring to included KIUC's 2005 intensive study on renewable energy technologies and a 2006 search for renewable power generation alternatives.

"We selected four technologies which has gone down to three now, and it's strictly power purchase — we're not paying for the development part or the cost of connecting it to our grid, but we're going to buy the power."

While having developers "foot the bill" will help save residents money, Crowell called such resourcefulness, small projects.

"They're not going to solve all the problems, but there's a lot of little things that will help along the way."

Voters should have received ballots in the mail containing the names of seven candidates.

The deadline for returning the ballot is 4 p.m. to KIUC on March 17.

• Amanda C. Gregg, staff writer, can be reached at 245-3681 (ext. 252) or agregq@kauaipubco.com.

Candidate's Sidebar

Editor's note: Apollo Kaua'i, a group of concerned Kaua'i residents fostering a secure energy future, mailed a set of questions weeks in advance of its Feb. 22 candidates' forum, to those running for the KIUC board. What follows are the responses from Dee Crowell.

Dee Crowell

1. What is your position on the use of coal for electricity generation on Kaua'i?

Coal does not get KIUC to the goal of energy self-sufficiency. Hopefully the renewable projects under way right now will be successful and will eliminate the need to consider coal as a fuel source.

2. How, in your opinion, do we find the balance between short-term electricity costs and moving towards clean, renewable energy?

This is kind of related to the coal question. It's a matter of timing and reliability. We





have a few years before we have to make a decision on how to replace KIUC's oil-based generators. We have to find out all we can about the construction and operation of renewable power generation technologies on Kauai. Then KIUC can make sound decisions regarding new power generation technologies that provide reliable power at reasonable rates.

3. Assuming no regulatory barriers, how far do you believe the CO-OP should go in helping the community achieve greater energy self-sufficiency?

KIUC is owned by the community, so it should go as far as the members want to go.

4. What creative strategies can KIUC employ in working with the County and the community to reduce and ultimately eliminate the use of electricity for domestic hot water heating?

This is not really a clear question. Are we talking about converting existing homes or just new construction? Is gas hot water heating an acceptable alternative to electricity? I would be willing to work with the county and the community to come up with solutions. KIUC has offered many incentives to get members to convert to solar hot water heaters. The results have been disappointing. If the County passed a bill to require something like mandatory solar water heating for new homes, KIUC should participate with the county to come up with a package to mitigate the cost of a solar system.

5. Do you support the continued use of purchase power agreements for all new renewable energy projects undertaken by the CO-OP?

Purchase power agreements (PPAs) are a good way to find out about renewable technologies without committing tens of millions of dollars of members' money. Staff is constantly inundated by people who see our electric rates and see dollar signs. PPAs are a way to make these people put their money where their mouth is. I can see KIUC doing more PPAs, but there will hopefully be more than one technology that proves itself. KIUC can then choose whether or not to invest in a proven technology or do more PPAs.

6. What is your position on distributed generation, and on KIUC's role in helping shape a more distributed system of electricity generation in the future?

Distributed Generation (DG) is very technical issue, because of the interface requirements. A DG operator needs to work closely with KIUC to make sure that the DG system operates compatibly with the KIUC System. So, DG in concept is a good idea, but each case would have to be evaluated individually, with renewable DG preferable to oil-fired DG.

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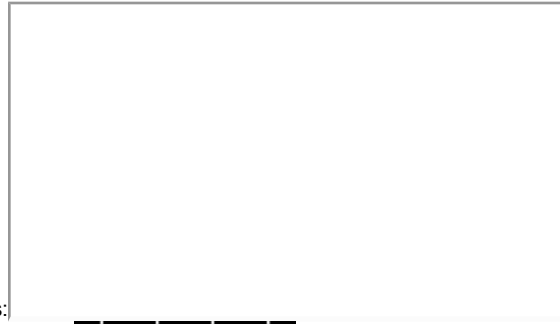
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