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**Ookala protests mill**

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Thank you, Tribune-Herald, for covering Ookala community's opposition to Tradewinds Forest Products building a veneer mill and co-generation power plant at the old Ookala sugar mill site. Peter Sur did a good job (June 17) and we appreciate him coming to investigate the story.

In the Tribune-Herald's June 27 article on the governor's intent to veto HB 2878, which would issue \$25 million in special purpose revenue bonds to help Tradewinds secure financing for the project, the president of Tradewinds, Don Bryan, is quoted as saying that, "There has been a lot of outcry from a small number of people and a great deal of support from a lot of people."

But at a meeting in Ookala that evening, hosted by Tradewinds, close to 100 people showed up, mostly Ookala residents voicing strong opposition. Also present were Mayor Harry Kim, Rep. Dwight Takamine, Councilman Fred Holschuh, East Hawaii Governor Liaison Dylan Nonaka and Governor's Advisory Council member Alton Okinaka. I'd like to thank these officials for coming out to listen to our concerns.

During the meeting, of the few people who expressed support for the project, only one was a resident of Ookala. On the other hand, many Ookala residents voiced opposition, raising concerns about mill yard and logging truck noise, increased traffic, particulate matter from the power plant's smokestack, daily import of coqui frogs and other pests, the detrimental impact on our peaceful lifestyle, and the negative effect on our property values. These speakers received enthusiastic applause from the crowd.

In fact, the overwhelming sentiment of the crowd was that our quiet village of about 90 homes, most located across the street from the mill site, is not an appropriate location for Tradewinds' heavy industrial business. The old mill site is from a by-gone era, silent for 20 years. One speaker pointed out that we are not an old company town in need of revitalization as Tradewinds claims, but rather a thriving residential community, and we'd like to stay that way.

The last Ookala resident to speak at the meeting was a longtime and well-respected community leader who previously supported the mill being located at the old sugar mill site. She spoke of how important it is for the Ookala community to voice concern, and that she herself now has doubts about Tradewinds locating at the old mill site. She thought maybe it would be better located on nearby Kamehameha Schools land, in the eucalyptus forest Tradewinds hopes to log, away from our homes.

During Mr. Bryan's presentation, he said that if the Ookala community didn't want the mill, Tradewinds would leave. I hope he is a man of his word.

Susie Collins

Ookala

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