

# Hawaii Reporter

## Freedom to Report Real News

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### **Shark Tour Operator Cannot Bait Hawaii Kai Community**

*250 Attend Townhall Meeting to Voice Their Opposition to Shark Tour Operator*

By Lori Wingard, 4/18/2009 4:57:43 AM



Rep. Gene Ward (R-Hawaii Kai-Kalama Valley) said today that as a result of last night's Town Hall meeting angered East Honolulu residents sent a clear message to shark tour owner, Iolani Lewis that they want nothing to do with his shark feeding tour operation in Hawaii Kai and that he should fully drop the idea for present as well as future considerations.

"Public safety is upper most in the community's mind, and I think this young man is deceiving himself if he believes he is going to win over the members of the Hawaii Kai community with his strategy of trying to educate us about sharks," Ward said.

As depicted in the media for the past week, the community is adamantly opposed to this project and will do all in its power to see that such an operation is not opened in Maunalua Bay. Ocean-activist, elder statesman of the surfers and protégé of Duke Kahanamoku, George Downing, while stating his strong opposition to the proposal went so far to say "if we can't stop you by other means we'll get a court injunction to make sure you don't start up operations in Maunalua Bay."

"Three things stand out as a result of last night's town hall meeting, Ward stated.

- 1) The first is a lesson taught by the experts in attendance at the state and federal levels is that shark feeding is illegal in state waters up 3 miles offshore, and between 3 miles and 200 miles shark feeding it is also illegal because of a recently passed federal law.
- 2) The second thing that stands out is the fact that though better laws against shark feeding tours are needed, enforcement is really the key to effective control of the industry. Just like illegal fireworks, enforcement just doesn't exist to catch people illegally chumming the waters for sharks, something that many boaters and bay users in Hawaii Kai believe has been going on for quite some time off Maunalua Bay.
- 3). The third lesson of the town hall meeting was that the Hawaii Kai community has already reacted swiftly to prevent this business from operating in Maunalua Bay. Two important decisions were made by the Hawaii Kai Marina Association and the Koko Marina Shopping Center to prevent the tour operator from returning with his boat, Snoopy 5 with a shark cage on it:

First – the shopping center canceled the Snoopy 5's docking permit and slip in the Marina after learning about the nature of the business which he had listed as non-commercial, and that the shopping center did not want to endanger its other water sports tenants with shark tours.

Secondly, the permit required to navigate a boat in the Hawaii Kai marina is governed by the Hawaii Kai Marina Association whose Board of Directors voted unanimously 15-0 to not allow a shark tour boat to operate from, in, or around the marina's waters.

"In summary, the shark-feeding operation cannot legally operate in our Hawaii Kai marina area or out in Maunalua Bay without breaking the law; this should be a clear signal to any shark tour operator that Hawaii Kai is not open for the shark business," Ward concluded.

Ward's office is now working with elected officials and the Hawaii Kai community to organize an interim task force/legislative information hearing and various working groups to settle the issue of shark feeding tours – not only in Maunalua Bay but for the entire state of Hawaii.

Ward's office coordinated the town hall meeting that was also co-sponsored Senators Sam Slom and Fred Hemmings, Representatives Lyla Berg and Barbara Marumoto, Councilman Charles Djou, Hawaii Kai Boat Club, Livable Hawaii Kai Hui, Ka Iwi Coalition, Malama Maunalua Bay, Hui Nalu Canoe Club, and the Hawaii Kai Neighborhood Board

The agenda of the meeting is attached listing the names of the guest experts speaking at the meeting.

*Lori Wingard is the office manager for Rep. Gene Ward*

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