

EDITORIAL ISLAND VOICES

Column: DHHL must use internet grant wisely

By Daniel C. Smith
Today - Last updated 6:36 p.m.



Dan Smith



Good news recently about funds for extending high speed broadband internet access on Department of Hawaiian Home Lands sites ("DHHL getting over \$72M to boost internet connectivity," Star-Advertiser, Nov. 13). With about 10,000 DHHL households, the \$72 million should be enough to get all DHHL residents online because some places on DHHL land do have good internet service already.

However, the Oct. 30 Hawaii Senate informational briefing raised some regulatory and legal issues that should be resolved so that DHHL can act promptly to put the grant to work. The principal one is that the monopoly on DHHL land by Waimana Enterprises, parent of Sandwich Isles Communications (SIC), has not been terminated despite its dropping service. Court case(s) remain(s) open.

Another concern is that Hawaiian Telcom was allowed to buy SIC's hundreds of miles of good, taxpayer-funded underground conduits, in a bankruptcy sale for a bargain price, but does not have an obligation — or ability because of the monopoly — to provide service.

It seems to me that DHHL (with money) and/or the state Public Utilities Commission (with regulatory power) could have intervened at the time of the bankruptcy sale. Some have suggested that the federal court should rescind its order and let DHHL take over the infrastructure and operations of SIC, probably with knowledgeable partners.

Despite many parties involved, it seems that DHHL could have claimed the conduits and contents and other infrastructure under several of the clauses of the 1995 Waimana license, such as abandonment, breach or access. When will the license be terminated, and what agencies and people are working on termination?

Of course, DHHL with a knowledgeable partner may now possibly rent — price to be determined — conduit or fiber space from Hawaiian Telcom to provide open access, to provide choices of internet service providers. Open access is important because there are many areas around Hawaii, including where I live, that have no choice of fiber speed broadband ISP (internet service provider). Therefore, we pay too much with no competition, or we miss out on better content. Also related to open access, UH has a grant to upgrade internet service in public housing and could enable open access.

Don't miss out on what's happening!

Stay in touch with top news, as it happens, conveniently in your email inbox. It's FREE!

Enter your email

Sign Up

By clicking to sign up, you agree to Star-Advertiser's and Google's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy. This form is protected by reCAPTCHA.

In addition to the \$72 million, DHHL has other substantial grants including one for training and computers so we may look forward to all families and residents in DHHL areas having the connections, skills and computer devices to benefit from high-speed internet at affordable prices for telehealth, education, workforce development and civic engagement as well as entertainment. Let's support creative and effective use of the grants.

Pearl City resident Daniel C. Smith, Ph.D., is a member of the Hawaii Broadband Hui and a retired airlines avionics engineer.

1 COMMENTS



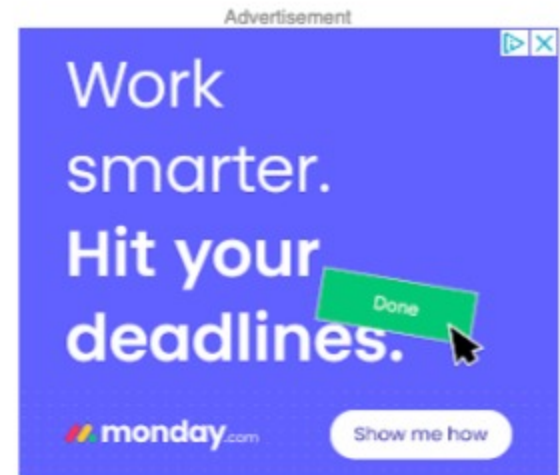
Coupon codes found!

Capital One Shopping is a free browser extension that applies coupon codes in seconds.

Apply Codes

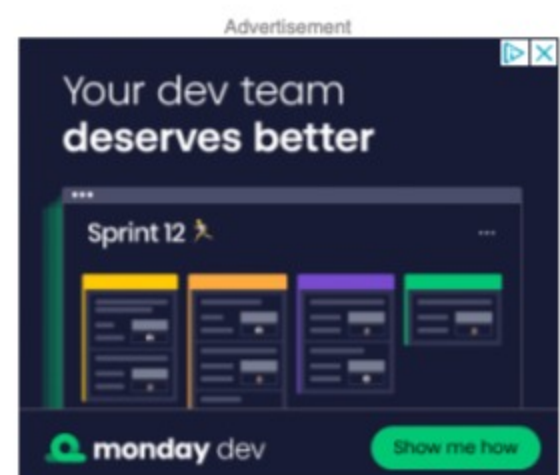
SUBSCRIBER FAVORITES

- 1 LAPD believes missing Maui woman in Mexico; no foul play suspected
2 Interim athletic director extends Hawaii football coach Timmy Chang's contract
3 Judge rejects request to restore Musk's \$56 billion Tesla pay
4 South Korean troops try to storm parliament after martial law declared
5 Aiea woman pleads guilty to federal conspiracy charge



MORE ISLAND VOICES

- Column: Trump tariffs will hurt the U.S. economy
Column: Empty homes tax raises many issues
Column: Honolulu rail's failures overburden residents
Column: Visitors' return key to furthering Japan-Hawaii ties
Column: Hawaii schools must grow good leaders



Upcoming Events

- Sat, Dec 14 @ 10:00am Mele Kalikimaka Marketplace
Tue, Dec 03 @ 6:00pm Kapena