

Rogers sings praises of Murdock's plans to develop Lanai

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LANAI CITY — Singer Kenny Rogers last night said he and Castle & Cooke chief David Murdock have Lanai's best interests at heart in their two resort development plans here.

Rogers spoke to a public hearing of the Maui County Council Planning, Land Use and Economic Development Committee on plans for a 410-unit project at Manele and Hulopoe Bays and a 468-acre project at Koele, next to Lanai City.

Murdock said he has plenty of plans for Lanai, including \$2 million in new recreational facilities such as a swimming pool and city park. He wants to rejuvenate "our little downtown," and beautify the island, he said.

Murdock and Rogers arrived yesterday afternoon aboard Murdock's private jet. Rogers said he and Murdock have common interests at several levels.

"I'm not here as a singer tonight," he said. "I am here as a concerned potential citizen of this island." That concern will be expressed in part by his paying for a professional tennis player to establish a junior tennis program for Lanai.

Rogers said he is involved in junior tennis programs in "the states," but he quickly corrected himself with "the Mainland."

He attempted to reassure residents concerned and unsure about Murdock's motives, calling him a "genuine, caring man."

"He has your best interests at heart. He cares about you. I care about you," said the tall, white-bearded singer, who shook hands and signed autographs with an easy smile.

About 140 people attended the hearing, but only 10 spoke. Each of the residents said he or she supported the project. Representatives of the ILWU, which represents Dole pineapple workers on the island, gave unqualified support.

The common concern of several speakers involved Murdock's plan for access to Hulopoe, the best beach on the island, and one with tide pools where many youngsters learn to swim. That's where a 150-room hotel and associated residential and condominium projects are planned.

Murdock said he plans to provide wide open access, and told The Advertiser he plans a roadway into a planned beach park, with a parking area just back of the shore, just as speakers requested.

He opened the public hearing with smiles and promises that "the things that we do on the island will be done in a first-class and honorable fashion."

"I love the beauty of the landscape. I love the beauty of the sea . . . I'd like to see the island of Lanai more beautiful than it is now," he said. The two resort/recreation/residential developments will provide jobs and will improve the island, he said.

"I believe development will create an island environment far more beautiful than we have now," he said.

Councilman Wayne Nishiki suggested Murdock's plans could use a couple of changes. He asked the executive to reduce the sense of a company town by selling commercial sites in Lanai City.

Murdock refused, saying he plans improvements the shop owners couldn't afford to fund and which would raise prices higher than they could afford to pay. Castle & Cooke will cover the costs, and rents will not be expected to cover them, he said.

"I feel you need a financially strong owner to improve a big area," he said.

Nishiki also said Murdock's Hulopoe hotel is simply a way to get to the island people who will buy his expensive resort house lots.

Murdock promised that affordable housing and job training would accompany his development.