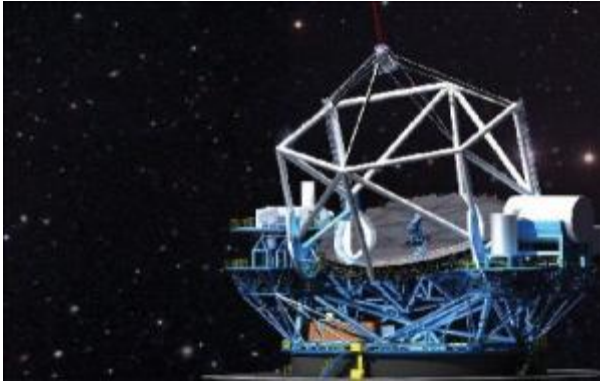


Local News

## Scope faces critics in Hilo



by *Peter Sur*

**Tribune-Herald Staff Writer**

Published: Thursday, June 18, 2009 9:39 AM HST

More than 150 people heard impassioned speeches Wednesday night in Hilo on a proposal to bring the Thirty Meter Telescope to the Big Island.

Much of it was negative, in stark contrast to Tuesday night's meeting in Waimea. While the first four speakers in Waimea spoke glowingly of bringing the advanced observatory to Hawaii, the first six speakers in Hilo all slammed the idea. But as the night wore on, more people spoke in favor of the project. The meeting was still ongoing as of press time, with 14 in favor of the telescope and 14 against.

The meeting, in the stuffy Hilo High School cafeteria, was the second of seven public meetings to be held around the Big Island and on Oahu to comment on the draft environmental impact statement.

If built on Mauna Kea's north slope, the TMT would be the world's largest optical/infrared telescope. It would give scientists a telescope with nine times the light-gathering ability of each of the W.M. Keck observatories, and 10 times sharper than space-based observatories.

But many in the Hawaiian and environmental community oppose its location on Mauna Kea. A decision on where to build it is expected next month.

Wednesday's meeting, like all the meetings, began with an hourlong "open house" where residents perused 30 or so large poster boards, questioned the TMT staff and enjoyed catered food.

Then came a 40-minute presentation on the TMT, its environmental effects, the relation between Hawaiian culture and astronomy, and the scientific abilities of the TMT. Then, the floor opened to

a "public discussion."

Early in the evening, Mayor Billy Kenoi offered strong support for the TMT and urged all to approach the proposal with "open minds, open hearts, open ears." Kenoi has no formal role in the approval process.

As mayor, Kenoi said he looked at the economic benefits of a billion-dollar development; as a Hawaiian, "we all look at Mauna Kea as a sacred mountain, wahi pana, a very sacred place," he said.

As a father, Kenoi said he was looking out for the best interests of his children.

"I don't want to see the astronomy and the telescope available only to the University of Hawaii," he said.

He also said in a statement that "I know that all of the participants in this discussion sincerely want the best outcome for our community, and we owe it to each other to debate the project in a reasoned, respectful way."

The opponents were equally passionate.

"If jobs are the concern, the Target store being built in Kona will offer twice as many jobs as TMT," said Kealoha Pisciotta, president of Mauna Kea Anaina Hou.

"Mauna Kea is a conservation district and a Natural Area Reserve," said Keomailani Van Gough. "No new development is supposed to go on these areas."

Noa Helela, a ninth-grader, said the draft EIS was poorly written.

Nelson Ho of the Sierra Club was in favor of building the TMT -- in Chile.

"This draft EIS lacks intellectual integrity and exhibits the continuing pattern of disrespect for Mauna Kea's full range of resources," Ho said, after citing deficiencies with the Mauna Kea Comprehensive Management Plan (Sierra Club has asked for a contested case hearing on the management plan).

"My culture and your science doesn't mix," said Clarence "Ku" Ching.

Others cited the economic benefits of the project. As during the CMP debate earlier this year, it often seemed as if proponents and opponents were talking about two completely different documents.

"There can be a balance between the Hawaiian culture and science. It can be done," said Wally Ishibashi, representing the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

"The state should take full advantage of the assets to secure the TMT," said state Rep. Jerry Chang, speaking for himself.

"We need to see more work on this island," said Frank Jenkins, a carpenter.

"I take the position that you have to look for the future, the future for our kids," said Robert Shioji.

The next meeting is today at 4 p.m. in the Pahoa High School cafeteria.

E-mail Peter Sur at [psur@hawaiitribune-herald.com](mailto:psur@hawaiitribune-herald.com).

## How to comment

1. Read the draft environmental statement, available for download at <http://www.TMT-HawaiiEIS.org>. Printed copies will be at libraries and are available upon request by mail. You may also call the toll-free hotline, 1-866-284-1716, for more information. The public comment period ends July 7.

2. Attend one of the public meetings on the draft EIS.

3. Submit comments, either at these meetings, through the above-mentioned Web site, the toll-free hotline or mail them to: TMT Observatory Project, Office of the Chancellor, University of Hawaii at Hilo, 200 W. Kawili St., Hilo, HI 96720-4091.

Also send a copy of your comments to: Office of Environmental Quality Control, 235 South Beretania St., Suite 702, Honolulu, HI 96813.

## EIS Meetings

- Today, Pahoia High School cafeteria, 5-8 p.m.
- June 22, Ka'u High/Pahala Elementary School cafeteria, 5-8 p.m.
- June 23, Kohala Cultural Center, 5-8 p.m.
- June 24, Kealakehe Elementary School Cafeteria, 5-8 p.m.
- June 25, Farrington High School cafeteria (Honolulu), 5-8 p.m.