RES25-320
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 11

*ZONING & PLANNING (ZON)

***ZONING & PLANNING (ZON) Meeting**

Meeting Date: Jan 15, 2026 @ 09:00 AM

Support: 4

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Andrew Pereira	apereira@prp-hawaii.com	96813
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Pacific Resource Partnership (PRP)	Support	Jan 12, 2026 @ 10:48 AM

Name:	Email:	Zip:
McKibbin Mist	mckibbinm@pacificrimland.com	96822
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Jan 13, 2026 @ 08:21 AM

Testimony:

Letter of Support for Geena Thielen

City Council Zoning and Planning Committee
City and County of Honolulu

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the appointment of Geena Thielen to serve on the Building Board of Appeals for the City and County of Honolulu.

Geena brings a wealth of experience, professionalism, and integrity that make her exceptionally qualified for this role. Her deep understanding of building codes and regulations, combined with her commitment to fairness and public safety, will be an asset to the Board. She has consistently demonstrated sound judgment and a collaborative approach in addressing complex issues, which is essential for maintaining trust and transparency in the appeals process.

I am confident that Geena will serve with diligence and uphold the highest standards in protecting the interests of our community. I respectfully urge the Council to confirm her appointment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

McKibbin Mist
Director/GRC Chair - BIA Hawaii
Manager - Līpoa Homes

Name:	Email:	Zip:
Geena Thielen	geena@ccs-hawaii.com	96734

Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
Self	Support	Jan 13, 2026 @ 04:32 PM
Name:	Email:	Zip:
Stefanie Sakamoto	ssakamoto@imanaka-asato.com	96789
Representing:	Position:	Submitted:
BIA Hawaii	Support	Jan 15, 2026 @ 08:48 AM

Testimony of
Pacific Resource Partnership

Honorable Members of the Honolulu City Council Zoning and Planning Committee
Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026

Subject: Strong support for Resolution 25-320, reappointment of Geena Thielen to serve on the Building Board of Appeals.

Aloha Chair Kia'āina, Vice Chair Waters, and Members of the Committee:

Pacific Resource Partnership (PRP) is a nonprofit organization that represents the Hawai'i Regional Council of Carpenters, the largest construction union in the state with approximately 6,000 members, in addition to more than 250 diverse contractors ranging from mom-and-pop owned businesses to national companies.

PRP writes in strong support of Resolution 25-320, confirming the reappointment of Geena Thielen to serve on the Building Board of Appeals of the City and County of Honolulu for a term expiring December 31, 2030.

As a licensed general contractor under Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 444 and a registered voter of the City, Ms. Thielen meets the qualifications outlined in Section 16-1.1(18) of the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu and Section 13-103(a) of the Revised Charter. Augmenting her impressive qualifications is her expertise in the field of construction, which is essential for the Board's duties, including hearing appeals on building codes, variances, and enforcement related to housing and infrastructure. Ms. Thielen has established herself as a thought leader and innovator in Hawai'i's construction industry, with a proven track record of addressing O'ahu's critical need for more housing.

As president of Complete Construction Services, which she founded in 2001 after becoming a licensed general contractor in 1996, she has spearheaded affordable housing developments that directly benefit working families. In 2025, her company completed projects under Honolulu's fast-

(Continued From Page 1)

track affordable housing program, adding 141 affordable rental units to the island despite challenges with permitting delays.

Ms. Thielen has been a vocal advocate for streamlining these processes, noting in public discussions that extended timelines—often 14 months to two years—hinder the ability to build housing quickly and efficiently for O'ahu residents. Her innovative approach extends to broader industry reforms. In November 2025, Ms. Thielen highlighted flaws in Hawai'i's building code update cycle, arguing that the rapid three-year revisions create unnecessary burdens and slow progress on safer, more affordable buildings amid the housing crisis. Her contributions were recognized in December 2025 when she received the Building Industry Association of Hawai'i's President's Choice Award, honoring her as a community advocate who elevates standards and strengthens housing access across the state.

As a longtime homebuilder, Ms. Thielen understands firsthand the urgency of increasing housing supply on O'ahu, making her an invaluable asset to the Building Board of Appeals. PRP urges the Committee to advance Resolution 25-320 and confirm Ms. Thielen's reappointment. Her leadership will help ensure fair, efficient administration of codes that support responsible development and address our community's housing needs.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Andrew Pereira

Director of Public Affairs
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January 7, 2026

Councilmember Esther Kia'aina
Chair Zoning & Planning Committee
Via e-mail: ekiaaina@honolulu.gov

Re: Resolution 25-320 Confirming the reappointment of Geena Thielen to serve on the Building Board of Appeals (BBA) of the City and County of Honolulu.

Dear Councilmember Kia'aina,

I look forward to the confirmation hearing before your committee on this matter on January 15, 2026. I would like to make myself available to you and members of the committee ahead of this meeting to discuss any questions you might have of me. I would also like to take this time to share with you some insights and opinions on the functioning of the BBA. I would like to emphasize that these are my opinions and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Board members.

During my tenure on the BBA I have to commend both the Chair, Chris Hong, as well as other members of the Board along with the staff that support us and allow us to function. Particular thanks to Taryn Rivera of Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP) for keeping us organized and Erica Osterkamp of Corporation Counsel for sound legal advice. Through increasing our meeting schedule and adopting innovative practices such as scheduling meetings and FAQ's to better prepare applicants, we have significantly reduced the backlog of hearings. While I am proud of these accomplishments I am disappointed by our ability as a Board to function as I believe is intended in the spirit of section 113 of Ordinance 24-15.

Stripped to it's most basic level the BBA is intended to be a place where Homeowners, Developers, Architects and Engineers can appeal to a panel of citizen experts on decisions reached by the Department of Planning and Permitting. A backstop to the excesses of bureaucracy. The problem is the statute limits the authority of the BBA with the following language –

In all cases not involving the use of new or alternate materials, an appeal shall only be sustained if the record shows that the decision of the *building official* is based on an erroneous finding of material fact, is based on arbitrary or capricious decision making, or is a manifest abuse of discretion. The board may reverse, affirm or modify, in whole or in part, the appealed decision. (highlight added for emphasis)

As the burden of the proof rests with the applicant, this is a terribly high bar for most of our applicants to meet. It is also a standard rooted in legal interpretation that renders our technical expertise irrelevant on some cases. I would offer the following examples of real-world cases that came before the BBA –

One Homeowner had a small section of a rock retaining wall bordering a sidewalk collapse. While the Homeowner made the repairs as directed, they did not get a permit for the repairs as directed. While myself and some other Board Members felt this added step was cumbersome and unnecessary, we had to find in favor of DPP as the applicant couldn't prove the requirement met the highlighted criteria above.

Several cases have come before us for unpermitted improvements that have been made by a prior Homeowner. While myself and other Board Members agree the current Homeowner is responsible for correcting the situation, the Notice of Violation (NOV), Notice of Order (NOO) and daily fines seem a harsh measure under the circumstances. We'd like to offer alternate solutions, but again are barred from doing so.

Perhaps for me the largest over-arching issue is the accrual of fines while DPP reviews and eventually approves a permitted solution to the violation. Since it is widely acknowledged that DPP has a substantial backlog and that these permits can take a year or more, it is simply unjust to hold Homeowners accountable for daily fines during this period. Yet we can offer no relief unless the three criteria above are proved by the applicant.

If the Council is interested in seeing the BBA have broader authority and discretion to intervene in these cases, I would encourage you to re-visit this language and consider modifications. Regardless of what decision the Council arrives at I will continue to offer my service to serve the BBA and the City to the best of my ability.

Sincerely,

Geena Thielen
President/RME

cc. Members of the Zoning and Planning Committee
Michael Formby, Managing Director
Chris Hong, Chair BBA

HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
Committee on Zoning
HONOLULU HALE
10:00 AM

January 15, 2026

Subject: Reso. 25-320 - Geena Thielen Confirmation, Building Board of Appeals

Chair Kiaaina, Vice Chair Waters, and members of the Council::

My name is Roseann Freitas, CEO of the Building Industry Association of Hawaii (BIA-Hawaii). Chartered in 1955, the Building Industry Association of Hawaii is a professional trade organization affiliated with the National Association of Home Builders, representing the building industry and its associates. BIA-Hawaii takes a leadership role in unifying and promoting the interests of the industry to enhance the quality of life for the people of Hawaii. Our members build the communities we all call home.

BIA-Hawaii is in strong support of the Reso 25-320, reappointing Geena Thielen to the Building Board of Appeals.

Ms. Thielen brings the type of experience, judgment, and professionalism that is essential for service on this Board. Her background demonstrates a strong understanding of building standards, regulatory compliance, and the practical challenges associated with construction and permitting in Honolulu. Just as importantly, she is known for her thoughtful, balanced approach and her ability to evaluate complex technical issues objectively and responsibly.

At a time when Honolulu continues to face serious housing and infrastructure challenges, it is especially important that the Building Board of Appeals include members who appreciate both the intent of the building codes and the need for reasonable, well-grounded interpretations that support safe and timely development. Ms. Thielen is well-qualified to contribute meaningfully to this work.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments on this matter.