What We Found

March 16, 2026

Why We Issued This Letter

Pursuant to its legislative review authority under JPCO §2-155.10(11)(f), the JPOIG issued this public letter to evaluate the efficacy of the Planning Advisory Board (PAB) membership qualifications outlined in JPCO §33-1.22(c)(2). This review was prompted by recent investigative findings indicating that the current property-ownership requirement conflicts with the PAB's intended purpose and established constitutional standards.

Why We Are Concerned

Property-ownership requirements present significant governance problems by arbitrarily excluding highly qualified professionals, such as urban planners, architects, and engineers, simply because they rent rather than own property. This mandate guarantees an underrepresentation of renter interests, despite renters possessing substantial stakes in local planning and zoning decisions. Because property ownership bears no correlation to actual planning expertise, maintaining this requirement restricts the applicant pool, undermines balanced community representation, and exposes the Parish to ongoing legal risk.

Responses

On December 8, 2025, the Chief of Staff for District 3 responded to the draft public letter on behalf of Councilman Byron L. Lee. The response officially affirmed that Councilman Lee concurs with the JPOIG's findings.

Background. The Jefferson Parish Planning Advisory Board (PAB) is a seven-member, Council-appointed advisory body responsible for conducting hearings and recommending action on land use, zoning, and subdivision items. Operating on a 2025 budget of $231,091, members serve four-year terms, receive a $150 per diem, and may meet up to 52 times annually. JPCO Sec. 33-1.22(c)(2) mandated that all members must reside, vote, and own property in Jefferson Parish.

Recent Appointments and Subsequent Investigations. On 9/17/2025, the Jefferson Parish Council agenda included a resolution to appoint Girod Jackson to the PAB as the representative for Council District 3. Upon review, the JPOIG determined that Mr. Jackson did not meet the qualifications because he did not own property in Jefferson Parish, as required by the Jefferson Parish Code of Ordinances (JPCO). The JPOIG formally notified the Council of this likely ineligibility prior to the meeting. The Council subsequently amended the resolution to substitute Simeon Dickerson as the appointee, approving him by a 7–0 vote; however, Mr. Dickerson likewise appeared to lack the JPCO required property qualifications. In response, the JPOIG initiated Investigation JPOIG #2025-0008, which marks the second investigation since 2018 regarding the appointment of an unqualified individual to the PAB. Upon further investigation, it was found that a separate PAB board member lacked the property ownership requirement as well.

Comparative Legal and Constitutional Deficiencies. Jefferson Parish's property-ownership mandate is an outlier; Louisiana state law, peer parishes (such as Orleans and East Baton Rouge), and neighboring states require only varying forms of voter qualification or residency. Furthermore, U.S. Supreme Court precedent establishes that property ownership bears no rational relationship to serving on governmental advisory bodies, even those specifically considering land-use issues, and is a form of unconstitutional wealth-based discrimination.

Subsequent Council Action. After the JPOIG notified the Council of existing unqualified appointments, the Council adopted Ordinance No. 27105 on 12/10/2025, removing the PAB property ownership requirement. However, despite possessing the JPOIG's draft recommendations, the Council failed to establish any new criteria requiring relevant knowledge or expertise.