

BENTON PARISH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

Monday, September 13, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.
Bossier Parish Courthouse
204 Burt Blvd.
Benton, LA 71006

MEMBERS PRESENT

Martha Reyenga
Steve Vercher
Bryan Kauffer
Michael Jorgensen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ray Delia

OTHERS PRESENT

Carlotta Askew-Brown
Daniel Besinaiz
Pat Doane
Neil Erwin
Ryan Estess
Rachel Hauser

Martha Reyenga, Chairman called the meeting to order.

(A) Carlotta Askew - Brown, MPC Executive Director, called roll and stated a quorum was present.

(B) SPECIAL CALL MEETING

1. Approve the Benton MPC 2022 Budget

Carlotta Askew-Brown, Benton MPC, was present to answer any questions.

Askew-Brown: Last year, there were some questions about the numbers and the totals that we made. We took over the Benton MPC in 2014 and I wanted to show you the case amounts that we were getting from 2014 to the current. In 2020, we made \$2,022. In 2021, site plan fees we have received to date are \$14,253.62 so it is a substantial increase. With that being said, my goal was to be completely independent of going into the savings for funds. We have met that goal. This year, we have made a total of \$26,087.62 to date.

There are some increase requests to the salaries. FICA and Medicare go with that. I have also requested increases in office equipment and supplies. Aside from that, we are not asking for any additional funds from the Police Jury or the Town so the total budget number remains the same.

Vercher: So now we are breaking even. That is wonderful.

As there were no further comments from the Board or the public, the Chairman called for a motion.

A motion to approve the Benton MPC 2022 Budget was made by Kauffer and seconded by Vercher.

A roll call vote was held and the motion carried unanimously.

4. Adjourn



Martha Reyenga, Chairman

10/4/21

BENTON PARISH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

Monday, September 13, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.
Bossier Parish Courthouse
204 Burt Blvd.
Benton, LA 71006

MEMBERS PRESENT

Martha Reyenga
Steve Vercher
Bryan Kauffer
Michael Jorgensen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ray Delia

OTHERS PRESENT

Carlotta Askew-Brown
Daniel Besinaiz
Pat Doane
Brad Coats
Ryan Estess
Micha Duffy
Neil Erwin
Rachel Hauser

Martha Reyenga, Chairman called the meeting to order.

(A) Carlotta Askew - Brown, MPC Executive Director, called roll and stated a quorum was present.

(B) PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. T-14-21 - The application of Brad Coats requesting an Amended Plat for Lost River Estates North, Unit No. 1 (Lot 16A) and Unit No. 2 (Lot 42A), being 0.183 acres more or less located in Section 32, Township 20 North, Range 13 West, Bossier Parish, LA. (Town Council District 5) (Police Jury District 3)

Brad Coats was present to answer any questions.

Vercher: Mr. Coats, do you own the lot where you are expanding your backyard?

Coats: Yes sir. I do.

Vercher: The utility servitude is not shown on here but I suspect there is one along the back. When you move the line, it will be entirely in the backyard.

Coats: That is correct.

Besinaiz: We received an updated plat that shows the servitude on the plat.

As there were no further comments from the Board or the public, the Chairman called for a motion.

A motion to approve the application was made by Kauffer and seconded by Jorgensen.

A roll call vote was held and the motion carried unanimously.

2. T-9-21 – The application of the Benton – Parish MPC to consider approval of the amended the Subdivision Regulations for the Town of Benton.

Carlotta Askew-Brown, Benton MPC, was present to answer any questions.

Askew-Brown: The town of Benton requested that the MPC with the help of Neil Erwin Law review the subdivision regulations and amend them to be in accordance with the laws. I will let Pat speak further on where we are with these amendments. We did receive some comments from engineers and we have made some amendments based on those comments as well.

Doane: We have four main areas that we worked on here. The authority and purpose was added to this for legal purposes. We amended quite a few definition to match current standards and we provided all of the plat requirements to clarify that for everyone. We also added and amended some lot requirements. We did get some great public input. Most of it has been rolled into this code. The document that was in your packet that describes the deliverables also describes those changes that we made. There is documentation of that public input, the review, and the revisions. The blue line font in that red lined copy are the most recent revision that are a result of the engineering comments.

Jorgensen: The stuff in there about the 10 percent of gross square footage to be designated as community green space, that is in there correct? Are there ramifications if the builder does not provide that green space?

Doane: It is in there. In fact, they have to lay it down in the very beginning and they do not get to move forward with development if they do not lay it out. That 10 percent cannot be utilities or drainage. It has to be actual usable green space.

Vercher: Where will lot sizes be addressed?

Doane: That is part of the zoning code. We will discuss lot sizes after these regulations are decided.

Estess: Regarding the 10 percent green space requirement, I want to make sure everyone is fully aware of how detrimental that is to the development community as a whole. Detention facilities generally take from 10 to 20 percent of your development and then adding that additional 10 percent on top of that essentially takes off 30 percent of the property off the board. You will see an increase in home prices, development costs, and lot costs.

Askew-Brown: I will also note that we have received some correspondence from the postal service about making sure that the developer speak with them about the placement of mail boxes. That is also in these regulations.

As there were no further comments from the Board or the public, the Chairman called for a motion.

A motion to table the application was made by Vercher and seconded by Jorgensen.

A roll call vote was held and the motion carried unanimously.

3. T-15-21/BP-19-21 – The application of the Benton – Parish Metropolitan Planning Commission to consider a resolution approving the adoption of the Future Land Use Maps and Text for the Town of Benton and the five mile unincorporated area of the Parish as a guide for future growth decisions within the Benton – Parish MPC jurisdiction.

Carlotta Askew-Brown, Benton MPC, was present to answer any questions.

Askew-Brown: This is a joint venture between the Benton MPC and Neil Erwin Law who helped us formulate these maps and texts for the future land use plan for the Town of Benton and the Parish unincorporated area. We have been working on this for a while and we have talked to the Police Jury, Aldermen, and we have also had citizen input. We think we have a product here that is excellent going forward.

Doane: Some of the things considered are the current road and streets, the current development patterns, the current uses that exist already, anticipated uses based on those traffic patterns, and the floodplain.

Vercher: When we adopt this tonight, where do we go from here? What public input have we had thus far?

Doane: We will have another public hearing with the Town Council and with the Police Jury. Tonight, we will approve, delay, or deny these plans. All of these plans will be recorded at the Louisiana Secretary of State. This plan will be considered as part of the Town and Parish infrastructure.

Jorgensen: So this is just a guide, correct? It can be changed?

Doane: Correct. It is a strong guide but it is not a law. It is not regulatory. It is a planning tool.

Jorgensen: At other public meetings, people were good with it?

Askew-Brown: Yes.

Estess: I have two questions. First, the Lost River property has been rezoned but it is shown on this map to be rural.

Doane: That needs to be looked at. I will update that.

Estess: The second thing I have today is about Cottage Hill. It is shown as rural on this map but we have been before you several times. That property is abutted on each side as residential low density.

Vercher: We are not talking about Cottage Hill tonight.

As there were no further comments from the Board or the public, the Chairman called for a motion.

A motion to approve the application with the condition that the Lost River section be updated to residential low density was made by Vercher and seconded by Jorgensen.

A roll call vote was held and the motion carried unanimously.

(C) PRELIMINARY HEARINGS

4. BP-18-21 – The application of River Ranch Acres, LLC requesting Preliminary Plat approval for Belmere Unit No. 6, being 24.597 acres more or less, located in Section 4, Township 19 North, Range 13 West, Bossier Parish, LA. (Police Jury District 3)

Micha Duffy, Coyle Engineering, was present to answer any questions.

Duffy: This is an expansion of Belmere. We will have to make some upgrades to the sewer system with the town. This has been on the books for a while.

Reyenga: Is unit 5 totally developed?

Duffy: We would have to ask the developer.

Reyenga: They have not received comments from Cypress Black Bayou?

Besinaiz: We had sent the plat to Mr. Robert Berry at Cypress Black Bayou. His response was that they are busy at the moment with Hurricane Ida evacuees so they ask for more time to review the plat.

As there were no further comments from the Board or the public, the Chairman called for a motion.

A motion to move the application to public hearing was made by Kauffer and seconded by Vercher.

A roll call vote was held and the motion carried unanimously.

5. BP-20-21 – The application of the Benton – Parish Metropolitan Planning Commission to review and consider Accessory Dwelling Unit regulations within the R-A (Residential Agriculture District) and the R-1 (One Family Residence Districts).

Carlotta Askew-Brown, Benton MPC, was present to answer any questions.

Askew-Brown: We have received a multitude of requests from people who would like to have accessory dwelling units. These are separate living spaces that are smaller than the main residential structure with kitchen and bathroom facilities. We were tasked with writing an ordinance that would allow it in the R-A and R-1 districts. This ordinance would not allow accessory dwelling units by right. It would require a planning approval, which will require them to go before this body and present what they are trying to do. I put some regulations in there. It must be constructed in the rear or side yard. It must be built on a permanent foundation. The design must match the architecture of the primary structure. If you have any further comments, we are open to them.

Kauffer: Would a shop in the back be allowed to have kitchen or bathroom facilities?

Askew-Brown: No.

Reyenga: It could be used for mother-in-law?

Askew-Brown: That is correct.

Vercher: How can we ensure that it is not used as a short-term rental? Can we put that we are not encouraging vacation rentals or short-term rentals?

Erwin: The restrictions on rentals could be built in because it is not now an approved use.

Askew-Brown: This ordinance is so that people do not have the put manufactured homes in their backyards. We are drafting a separate ordinance for short-term rentals at the moment.

Jorgensen: Are there other cities and planning commissions that have ADU regulations similar to this one?

Askew-Brown: Yes, all across the country.

Besinaiz: Especially in areas that have affordability crisis, there are a lot of regulations on ADUs. We are trying to stay ahead of that issue as housing prices rise here with the rising cost of lumber and things like that.

Jorgensen: Do HOAs have the authority to not allow these?

Askew-Brown: Yes, this ordinance does not supersede covenants.

As there were no further comments from the Board of the public, the Chairman called for a motion.

A motion to move the application to public hearing with the condition of adding restrictions on short-term rentals was made by Vercher and seconded by Kauffer.

A roll call vote was held and the motion carried unanimously.

6. BP-21-21 – The application of the Benton – Parish Metropolitan Planning Commission to review and consider regulations for a Separate Dwelling Unit for a Caregiver within the R-A (Residential Agriculture District) and the R-1 (One Family Residence Districts).

Carlotta Askew-Brown, Benton MPC, was present to answer any questions.

Askew-Brown: We were tasked with drafting an ordinance that addresses the caregiver situation that we are experiencing out in the parish. Bossier City already has an ordinance that is similar to this. We are seeing people who want to retain their independence but want to put something in the back until such time that they do not need it any longer. This caregiver ordinance would not be a by-right use. It would be a special exception use where they would have to go before the Board of Adjustments. There are some regulations in here that go into what a caregiver unit is. This is giving them an avenue for this purpose. This is not to allow for permanency of these units. They are temporary.

Reynga: Strictly modular in the back yard?

Askew-Brown: Manufactured or modular in the back yard.

Jorgensen: Has there been an issue with this?

Askew-Brown: We are just seeing it come up more often. People with dementia, for example, want to retain their independence but might want their caregiver to live in a separate dwelling in the back.

Reynga: A modular build might not be so temporary once it is placed.

Erwin: This is something that I think we all should be aware of. We live in a very low-tax area so the supportive government does not support as much government staff as some other parts of the country. Therefore, this police jury operates on a complaint-made basis except for standard housing and overweight trucks. We all need to be aware of that as we talk about regulations. We need to get the word out to people that people will lie about the use of their structure and we will not know about it until a complaint is made. We need to think about the potential downside to people who are not complying.

Askew-Brown: In addition to that, we use two-year renewals to ensure that people are still using these dwellings for the approved use.

Reynga: I would be angry if I was the neighbor of someone that put a home in their backyard.

Jorgensen: Is it too much to be yearly renewals?

Askew-Brown: We have found that to be tedious in Bossier City but we can do it yearly.

Jorgensen: I do not think we are too busy here to consider it.

Askew-Brown: If they do not comply, we send it to the parish attorney to take legal action.

Vercher: How did you come up with a minimum two acre lot?

Askew-Brown: It is what we had in the Bossier jurisdiction. It is almost like the R-A regulation of having one house per acre.

Jorgensen: So this would not be for high-density places anyways.

Erwin: We could use a fine or fee as a way to ensure that people continue to use these structures for the approved use.

As there were no further comments from the Board or the public, the Chairman called for a motion.

A motion to move the application to public hearing was made by Jorgensen and seconded by Vercher.

A roll call vote was held and the motion carried unanimously.

REGULAR MEETING

1. Approval of Minutes
 - a. A motion to approve the August 2, 2021 was made by Vercher and seconded by Jorgensen.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. Old Business
N/A
3. New Business

Besinaiz: I do have something to say as new business. You may have seen the Young Professionals Initiative through the Shreveport Chamber of Commerce released the names honored on their 40 Under Forty list for 2021. This list honors forty young professionals under the age of 40 that have made a significant impact in the Shreveport-Bossier area in their individual quests to make the area a better place to live, work, and play. As the very first hire in her new capacity, I would like to publicly congratulate MPC's very own executive director, Mrs. Carlotta Askew-Brown, who was listed as one of these impactful individuals. It is a huge privilege to be able to soak in her expertise and to learn from her experiences. She is very humble but I am not afraid to brag on her behalf. I cannot overstate how worthy Carlotta is of this award. So, again, thank you for all of your hard work and congratulations.

Askew-Brown: Thank you. I appreciate it. Board members, if any of you are interested in attending the APA Louisiana conference in Lafayette later this year, let me know.

4. Adjourn


Martha Reyenga, Chairman