

BENTON PARISH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

Monday, October 3, 2022 – 6:00 P.M.

Bossier Parish Courthouse

105 Sibley Street

Benton, LA 71006

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Martha Reyenga

Brian Kauffer

Steve Vercher

Wes Shepherd

OTHERS PRESENT:

Carolina Zet Blunck

Jayne Gilmour

Pat Doan

Mayor Shelly Horton

Jonathan Hodge

Steven Wilkins

Betty Wells

Ryan Estess

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Michael Jorgenson

(A) Martha Reyenga called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

(B) The invocation was led by Brian Kauffer.

(C) Pledge of Allegiance was led by Wes Shepherd.

(D) Jayne Gilmour called roll and stated a quorum was present.

(E) A motion was made by Michael Vercher and seconded by Wes Shepherd to approve the agenda.

The motion carried unanimously.

(F) PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. T-5-22 – The application of Jonathan Hodge, requesting a Zoning Amendment to change the zoning classification of a tract of land being .96 acres, more or less, from R-2 (Multiple Family Residence District) to B-1 (Transition Business District) for a proposed commercial office building. (northwest corner of 3rd Street and Pine St.) (Town Council District 1) (Police Jury District 3)

Jonathan Hodge was present.

Hodge: Is there anything you would like to know?

Vercher: Can you briefly describe what you are doing and what type of businesses you intend to have here?

Hodge: It is a small rental office building. We are hoping to have 7 units that are anywhere from 1800 to 2100 square feet. That is our plan.

Reyenga: Mayor, do you have anything to add to this?

Mayor Shelly Horton was present.

Mayor Horton: This will have to come before the City Council.

Reyenga: Does anyone else have any questions or comments?

Steven Wilkins was present.

Wilkins: A few years ago, they tried to put a truck stop up here. The residents were heavily opposed to that because of the noise concern. There are some concerns with the noise from this commercial zoning change. The premise of businesses being in that area is something that my neighbors do not want. I am on Sibley Street so I am maybe a block and a little to the west from where the

Dollar General is. We have seen a significant increase in traffic as far as people coming to the dollar store. We have the foot traffic from the residents in the rehabilitation center and the apartments. We are not opposed to Benton growing but I think the concern is the possible gentrification of that part of Benton. This has been a bedroom community for years and in that particular part of the district it is quiet. We do hear the sirens and get a lot of ambulatory visits at the senior apartments that are there but we just do not want the business there in that section of town. There are a lot of elderly people that live in that area. We just don't know what having that there would attract additionally. So for that reason, we just don't want that in our neighborhood.

Vercher: You realize that this is going to be a B-1, right? Do you know what a B-1 is? If you understood what a B-1 is, you would understand that it is actually quieter than a medium density residential zoning classification. This would be like a library or a gift store. At the very worst, you'd have an insurance agent there.

Blunck: There are limited hours of operation and that would be 8 to 5.

Hodge: We are hoping for an insurance company or a title company or things of that nature. We understand that this would be sitting on the edge of this neighborhood. We don't want this to be the only thing we do here in Benton so we have already talked about things like landscaping and positioning of buildings so that this faces back toward the fire department. We are open to any scenario that would help people feel a little more comfortable about this project.

Betty Wells was present.

Wells: I just came to the meeting just to find out what kind of commercial building they were planning to put there. I've lived there for over 30 years. We try to keep it nice and clean because we are on the corner. I was hoping that we could get more houses there on that street. I just wanted to come to this meeting to see what was going on.

Reyenga: I think this will be very low-key. There won't be much of a traffic concern. I think this will be a more secluded area back behind the fire department. I don't think this will cause any problems.

Vercher: I see your elevations you submitted and you talked about enhancing it with some landscaping. Tell us what the buildings will be made of or what these buildings would look like.

Hodge: We would like to see a wood frame but more of the stucco brick style. It won't have the metal look. We hope this will be a long term asset. We will probably have some renderings for the City Council.

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 a seconded by Shepherd.

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

2. T-9-22 – The application of Ryan Estess, Raley and Associates, requesting Master Plat approval for North Benton Heights Subdivision, being 20.566 acres, more or less, located in Section 20, Township 20 North, Range 13 West, Bossier Parish, Louisiana. (Town Council District 1) (Police Jury District 3)

Ryan Estess was present.

Estess: I'd like to discuss the master plat and answer any questions you might have. I know that this property is unique being that it is half in the town and half in the parish. The subsequent case is the plat for the portion that is in the Town of Benton. There are some issues that we are trying to work through. We are trying to make sure we get all those questions answered.

Vercher: I think you just resubmitted this plat today, right?

Estess: Correct. I was unaware that it was not resubmitted. It was resubmitted today.

Vercher: I think that it is in our best interest if you would delay this. There are about 10 unresolved issues. Some of these might have been worked out. Some of these might still be in the talking stage. In order to move this forward, I would prefer for all of those issues to be worked out.

Estess: That's fine. We met with the Mayor and I think everything was fine. We discussed the sewer and the water. We are going to run new sewer and we are going to loop the water where it needs to be looped. We addressed the comments on the plat. I think the only comment on the plat was changing a few setbacks. We got all of that worked out. I've been doing this a long time and I still get confused with some of the requirements on the checklist. We can work through all of that.

Vercher: Good. We want to make sure that all of the lots are the minimum size. There's a couple of little things here.... a servitude is needed there...maybe a mis-numbered lot number ... just some little things.

Estess: I'm not sure what the servitude need is...

Doane: It is a setback.

Estess: You want a side yard setback? Is that a 10? I'm going to write that on this plat.

Vercher: It is just an example of things that we'd like to see to make sure that we are ready to move forward.

Estess: On the plat, that lot 21 should have a 5' side yard. If you want me to show that or if you want to do something different that is more than fine too. I think we can make all of that work. I just need to know what the request is.

Doane: I think you can work that out with Carlotta and Carolina.

Estess: This is a 25' setback on the rears and we changed the side yards to 20'.

As there were no further comments from the Board or the public, Mr. Estess requested that the application be delayed 30 days or until the next planning commission meeting.

A motion to delay the application until the next planning commission meeting was made by Vercher and a seconded by Shepherd.

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

3. T-8-22 – The application of Ryan Estess, Raley and Associates, requesting Preliminary Plat approval for North Benton Heights Unit No. 1, being 5.683 acres, more or less, located in Section 20, Township 20, Range 13 West, Bossier Parish, Louisiana. (Town Council District 1) (Police Jury District 3)

Ryan Estess was present.

Vercher: This is somewhat related to the master plan we just talked about but I was told that for the most part they are ok but there are still some unresolved issues with water and sewer.

Mayor Horton: Not with water and sewer. I think there are some setback issues that are not clearly defined on the plat. Some of the other things that would normally be required in a subdivision... this is a main thoroughfare that the Town of Benton currently owns. Obviously, we are not going to change that and go to subdivision style street with curb and gutter because that is a thoroughfare that is maintained by the Town of Benton. There were some questions on the electrical. The electrical is overhead and it currently feeds electrical to the north of there. That will need to stay in place. I was concerned that some of those poles are way back up in the lots. Are those going to be relocated?

Estess: I do not know off hand. If we need to relocate the poles to get them closer to the road, we will do what the town wants. It is on open ditch so we can't get them too close to the road. We have not topo'd this. We will topo all the way down from Lot 10 all the way through and get with the town. We will have to submit plans to them for the water line extension. That is all something we can work through.

Mayor Horton: The water and sewer is good. There was a setback issue. Pat, do you have some comments about Lot 21?

Doane: I think a rear yard setback, as Steve mentioned, on this triangular lot, Lot 21...

Estess: Well I don't know if that is a rear yard, it just said setback.

Vercher: It backs up to lots 16, 15, 14 and 13 so it is a rear yard.

Estess: That is something we will have to look at. I need to make sure that it is a buildable lot because I was assuming that it was a side yard. Most lots aren't triangles. We will have to get with the planning commission. It is what it is. If that lot is not buildable lot, I will just space out lots. That is just a unique lot.

Mayor Horton: Other than the utility poles and just not knowing where they are going to fall in the lots and I'm sure you don't know at the moment where these will be...

Estess: I know where the right of way is but I don't know where the utilities are.

Mayor Horton: Is the service line going to the house... is that going to be underground?

Estess: They should do underground.

Doane: Can you explain these setbacks and the square footage on this lot since this is below 60' of frontage now?

Estess: Well it is 60' at the rear. It is 56' at the front. The square footage of Lot 17 is 9,662 square feet.

Doane: I think they need to remove that because they need 6000... they don't have a frontage requirement so you are good on that. Carlotta said they are drawn at 25' and they are labeled 20'.

Estess: No, they are drawn at 20' and they are labeled 20'. If you look, you can definitely see the difference. That was a discrepancy because usually most subdivisions on corner lots, they allow for a setback variance or deviation from a front yard. If you look at lots 15 and 16, they are shown as a 20' building setback. It thought we had that worked out in that meeting. Usually it is a 15 on something like that.

Vercher: Ryan, how soon are you wanting to push this through?

Estess: It would be next month. We still have to go to the council, right?

Vercher: I just wanted to make sure all of these things mesh with the master plan.

Estess: The only thing is ... Lot 21. If Carlotta and Carolina make the decision that Lot 21 is a rear, then we will just show a line there. Other than that, I am not planning on making any other changes.

Mayor Horton: I think we might benefit from another meeting like we had before. I think that was very productive. That way, you won't have to bring all of these problems to the MPC because we have worked them out ahead of time.

Vercher: If we move this forward tonight, you would have another meeting before it goes to the town or do you want that meeting to occur and then it comes back to us? I think we should just let this go along with the master plan.

Estess: That's fine. We can delay this another 30 days.

Reyenga: Are these lots and homes just like the ones we have across the railroad tracks?

Estess: I think the square footage they are shooting for is 1400 square feet. The smallest lot size we have is 7800. The largest lots are a little over 9000.

As there were no further comments from the Board or the public, Mr. Estess requested that the application be delayed 30 days or until the next planning commission meeting.

A motion to delay the application until the next MPC meeting was made by Vercher and seconded by Kauffer.

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

(G) PRELIMINARY HEARINGS

(H) REGULAR MEETING

1. Approval of Minutes

- a. A motion to approve the September 12, 2022 minutes was made by Kauffer and seconded by Shepherd.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. Old Business

3. New Business

4. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 6:42 pm.

  
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Martha Reyenga