

BENTON PARISH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

Monday, August 1, 2022 – 6:00 P.M.  
Benton Town Hall  
105 Sibley Street  
Benton, LA 71006

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Martha Reyenga  
Brian Kauffer  
Steve Vercher

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Michael Jorgenson  
Wes Shepherd

OTHERS PRESENT:

Carlotta Askew-Brown  
Carolina Zet Blunck  
James Hebert  
Joe Lott  
Jason Youngblood  
David Kunz  
Ryan Estess

Jayne Gilmour  
Chris Myers  
Wendy Lott  
Pat Doane  
Mayor Shelly Horton  
Jake Overton

- (A) Steve Vercher, 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 Steve Vercher.
- (D) Jayme Gilmour called roll and stated a quorum was present.
- (E) A motion was made by Martha Reyenga and seconded by Brian Kauffer to approve the agenda.

The motion carried unanimously.

(F) PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. **T-6-22** – The application of Jason Youngblood, JY Property Group, LLC, requesting an Amended Plat, Pine Hills Subdivision, Third Filing, Lots 1 and 2 being .458 acres, more or less, municipally known as 929 Mitchell Street, Benton, Louisiana. (Town Council District 1) (Police Jury District 3)

Applicant was not present.

A motion to delay the application was made by Martha Reyenga and seconded by Kauffer.

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

2. **BP-19-22** – The application of River Ranch Acres Company, LLC, requesting an Amended Plat, Belmere Unit No. 6, being 24.191 acres, more or less, located in Section 4, Township 19 North, Range, 13 West, Bossier Parish, Louisiana. (Police Jury District 3)

Chris Myers was present to answer questions.

Myers: Towards the end of the cul de sac, the street made an east, west and north, south turn. We have realigned that to more of a straight diagonal street that parallels a potential canal extending the Black Bayou Reservoir. There are two reasons why that was done. One was Black Bayou Reservoir insisting on excavating the lake to give actual waterfront property instead of water view property. With no improvements on the lake, these lots would have been water view lots and therefore an owner could never build a boat house or dock or something along the water. In order to facilitate that, we felt we could re-arrange the road to get more waterfront properties and dredge out the lake to maximize the economy of those lots. I think we have a fewer lots than what we did before and these lots are also larger than what was previously submitted due to how deep they are.

Vercher: So are these the first lots in Belmere to have waterfront?

Myers: Correct.

James Hebert was present.

Hebert: I am wanting to see the plats. My lot backs up to the property they are talking about.

Vercher: I am ok if Chris wants to show the plats.

Hebert: We were wondering if we could ask the developer if they could only cut the trees they need for their street coming in. There are some very tall trees on the back of those lots backing up to our lines. I paid thousands of dollars to get trees planted in my lot both in the front and back yard. I would think the lots would be more valuable if they left the trees and let the buyer cut what they had. If they clear cut like they did the other one all of that would be gone. For these people, it gives them some privacy from the lots behind them. That is what we were wondering, if they would consider doing that.

Myers: I believe the lots along Bay Hills North Unit 2, Phase 2, those trees will be removed due to grading issues. I'm not sure how well these lots on the other side of the pipeline, 200, 201 and 202... I'm not sure how, as far as grading is needed along that property line. I can't speak for the developer if he is going to remove all of the trees but as far as the grading goes, these trees have more of a chance to remain. I can't commit to that.

Vercher: Those are some really deep lots... 198, 199, 200.

Mary Jones was present.

Jones: I just wanted to see the plat and how it would affect Aaron Lane.

Myers: This would not affect you. The next one, Unit 7, will.

Wendy Lott was present.

Lott: This canal that they are talking about dredging out and the cove they are dredging, there are three houses on that cove and ours is one of them. It has always been a quiet cove. There is no boat traffic through there and we like it that way. When we saw them taking clearing out all of that and taking down every tree and bush we thought... we like trees. We thought that they would be building two houses or maybe three at the end of the cove. We had no idea that they would be dredging out a cove and putting how many houses?

Myers: For Unit 6, there would be potentially 8 waterfront houses.

Lott: These are some very narrow lots. They are long narrow lots. There are multiple subdivisions on the lake and all of the houses are very nice, large houses. I would like to know the minimum required square footage for the houses. I don't see how much of a house could fit on those lots.

Askew-Brown: It cannot be less than 1400 square feet.

Lott: That is about 3000 square feet less than our house on the cove. That is a big difference. I don't see how anything wider than a New Orleans Style shotgun house would fit on those lots. It just seems like they are trying to get the most people that can say they have a waterfront lot as possible to make money and I understand that. I just can't even fathom the ecological damage that this will do to our lake. We all love our lake so much. In recent years, we had wake boards coming through there and they are filled with water in the bottom and they make these huge waves. We have lost about 10 feet of our property due to erosion.

It used to gradually slope into the water. Adding the additional boat traffic to this little cove is going to make it even worse. We were told that if we put in a sea wall we could not recoup that land. We could not backfill the lake because we were told it would change the topography of the lake bed and you are not allowed to alter the lake bed.

Vercher: You are right.

Lott: So we aren't allowed to backfill the lake. What I don't understand is what the difference is with them dredging out the lake bed to make it deeper in the back of the cove. That is drastically affecting the lake bed. A 1400 square foot house, as compared to all of the other homes on the lake, will decrease the value of our house. We are very much opposed to this.

Joe Lott was present.

Lott: I understand this development is underway. The trees have been cut. I'm not sure where this board crosses over with the Black Bayou Board of Directors but the erosion control is a big deal for us. It takes a lot just to get approved to build a sea wall. What is going to happen in the back of the cove? What are their requirements? Our neighbor waited 9 months just to get a survey to redo their sea wall. It's a two year process if you can find somebody that will do it. Then they are two years behind. As my wife mentioned, we have lost 10 feet of our property. Are they going to build sea walls in the back of that cove to control some erosion? We will just have to react to that the best we can. I do not know if that is any of your decision making or if it is all up to Black Bayou Board. Can you tell me whether this has all been approved to that point?

Vercher: Is this favorable by Cypress Black Bayou?

Askew-Brown: Yes. The only comment they had was that they have to pull permits at such time when they start digging for sea walls and channels.

Lott: They have been digging. Do they have the full permitting access for digging out the end of the cove or is that your jurisdiction.

Myers: I believe we are required to build a sea wall. I am not sure what time or phase of construction that will be but we are required to build a sea wall on this canal. As far as permitting, I am not sure where we are with approval.

Askew-Brown: The previous masterplan that was submitted back in 2007 had 48 lots. This has 56 lots. The committee approved a different version of the masterplan that had more lots. They have actually reduced the number of lots. In 2021, we approved 61 lots. They came back to amend the masterplan because of Cypress Black Bayou and they reduced the density from 61 lots to 56 lots but the original masterplan had 48 lots. So they are actually closer to the masterplan with this.

Vercher: I see. In the masterplan, did they show the channel and where they were trying to get lakefront lots?

Askew-Brown: Yes.

Vercher: What happened with the lot sizes? These lots are deep.

Myers: The other option was to create a flag lot. I don't think the MPC would allow that.

Vercher: Any other comments from the public?

Wendy Lott asked to address the Commission.

Lott: I just wanted to show you this picture. This is our neighbor's lot. The sea wall comes out to here and our land used to slope down to there and now it is back up to here. That is 10 feet. You can see all of our tree roots coming out on the land here. A lot of our yard is completely gone. More boats will make that worse. You said Cypress Black Bayou has approved this? I don't understand why they are good with that when they will not allow existing property owners to retrieve their property that they had because it will change the bottom of the lake when they are changing the bottom of the lake. What is the difference? It just does not make sense to me. The same rules and regulations should apply to everybody. This seems not right.

Vercher: We have all known about this subdivision. Mr. Aiello came to the last meeting for the last unit. We went all through the drainage issues and getting it away from Bay Hills. You have all of your drainage all worked out as far as not pushing water on Bay Hills or on anyone else?

Myers: There is water that is already going to Bay Hills. We are minimizing that so it will be less run off than what was before. It will not be more run off toward Bay Hills.

Vercher: When was your Cypress Black Bayou Hearing and approval?

Myers: About three months ago.

Vercher: Do you have to go back to them with this Final Plat if it changed?

Myers: I am not sure.

Vercher: You are not sure? Is this approved by them?

Myers: The original plat was approved by them.

Askew-Brown: As a part of the review process, we also send this to Cypress Black Bayou. We sent this to Robert Berry. On July 22, he said he is good with the development but that they will need to pull permits at such time they start the sea wall. Those were his comments. The only other comment we received was we need a letter of no objection from the pipeline company.

Myers: We have not gotten that letter yet from Enterprise Pipeline.

Vercher: That goes across those long skinny lots. When was the last time you contacted Enterprise?

Myers: I would have to get back with you about that.

Vercher: Have they started in work out there?

Myers: They have started grading. Rough grading.

Reyenga: Are the owners of these lots all going to have to drive over the gas line to get to their homes?

Myers: I believe lot 201 and 202 will have to but I am not sure about lot 200. There is enough buildable area for a house on lot 200. It would be up to the lot owner. I think it is a 10 or 12 inch gas line.

Reyenga: The 65 foot width on some of these lots, even though it meets the minimum requirement, are awful long in length for that width. That is my personal opinion.

Myers: That is part of the reason we moved away from that previous plat submittal. Those were much shorter to get even more lots in there. The only way to make those lots shorter would be to make a flag lot and have someone live off the road in the back. That is just not what people want to do.

Vercher: I'm not comfortable with this. When you get the gas easement across there, I'd be more comfortable. Do you think Robert can come to the next meeting? We don't actually approve these, we just make recommendations to the Police Jury.

Pat Doane was present.

Doane: I think that is a legal recommendation. You have a previous masterplan with an unknown width of lot sizes on the previous plan. There are still things to be discovered.

Myers: I thought we had an approved revised masterplan already. The masterplan with 61 lots was approved, correct?

Askew-Brown: It was.

Vercher: How did this one geometrically change? Did the approved masterplan have these long skinny lots?

Askew-Brown: It did. A portion of them were smaller. Not all of them, but a portion of them were small. There is just more of them. The gas pipeline was shown on the approved plat.

Vercher: When was that approved?

Askew-Brown: Approved by the MPC on November 1, 2021. The Police Jury approved it December 15, 2021. The biggest issue then was the drainage.

Vercher: I guess the unresolved issue for you is the gas pipeline.

Myers: Yes and that would be access to those three lots.

Vercher: These lots on the previously approved plat don't look the same as this proposed plat. We have some unresolved issues.

Myers: This plat configuration minimizes the number of crossings.

Vercher: These are 65 feet wide and a football field in depth.

Myers: Ok.

Reyenga: Was the gas line across these others?

Askew-Brown: Yes.

Vercher: Are there any other comments from the public? Are there any other comments from the Board?

Askew-Brown: I wanted to let you know that the parish portion of the subdivision regulations have been updated like we have for the town.

Vercher: If there are no further questions, do we have a motion? Chris, we have no motion. I know we have some unresolved issues. Would you want to come back next month after getting some of the unresolved issues taken care of?

Myers: We were expecting some sort of contingency based on gas pipeline approval.

Kauffer: Is it disclosed to the person buying those lots that there is a gas pipeline running across them?

Myers: The line would be marked.

Carlotta Askew-Brown: Also, if the real estate agent discloses it or if the buyer requests the plat. Typically, if they have a new build, they will know.

Kauffer: I wouldn't want my house that close to the gas pipeline.

Vercher: It looks to me, if I am looking at this right, the previously approved plat, on that side of the channel, had 3 or maybe 4 lots that were on the lake. Now on that side of the lake, we have 10 or 11?

Myers: I guess I am trying to get direction on what it is that you are not approving on this plat. Is it just the long lots? They are too long? Or are you saying that you need a pipeline letter for approval? Or both?

Vercher: Yes.

Myers: We don't want flag lots but if that is what you want we could try that.

Reyenga: Are there very many flag lots?

Askew-Brown: Not in subdivisions like this. If there is no motion here, this is denied and they will have to start over.

Vercher: I would like to see him get his gas easement squared away. Let's look at the number of lots that were previously approved verses what is there.

Myers: Could we delay this application until the next meeting?

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

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

Recall item #1

3. **T-6-22** – The application of Jason Youngblood, JY Property Group, LLC, requesting an Amended Plat, Pine Hills Subdivision, Third Filing, Lots 1 and 2 being .458 acres, more or less, municipally known as 929 Mitchell Street, Benton, Louisiana. (Town Council District 1) (Police Jury District 3)

Jason Youngblood was present.

Youngblood: I am just wanting to amend the subdivision plat. I have a rental property on the corner of Mitchell Street and Lewis Avenue. I have an empty lot right next to it. I am trying to turn that current line 90 degrees. It currently runs north and south. I am wanting to make it east and west. I want to improve the property and build another house there. It will be a rental property.

Reyenga: Lots 14 and 15 are in the direction facing Mitchell Street and now you want them facing Lewis Street. Is that right?

Youngblood: The current house I own is on Mitchell Street. The front door faces Mitchell Street. That house splits two property lines. That property runs north and south and literally splits my house in half. I own both properties. I am wanting to move that property line and split the lot going east and west. It will keep my current house from being cut in half and open up the lot next to it so I can build another house.

Reyenga: Your house is located on the corner of Lewis and Mitchell. Was it built in the beginning as a split lot?

Youngblood: Correct. Someone made a mistake somewhere.

Reyenga: So now you are wanting to make the remaining piece of property facing Mitchell.

Youngblood: It faces Mitchell now. The current plat looks like it faces Lewis Avenue but it is not. It is facing Mitchell.

Reyenga: Would he have to come back to us to build on the back half?

Askew-Brown: If this is approved today, the plat goes to the Town of Benton for an approval hearing. If the town approves it, he can pull his permits.

Reyenga: The town is ok with this?

Mayor Shelly Horton was present.

Mayor Horton: We are actually glad that something is being done with this lot. It has been an eye sore for a while. We want him to be aware of setbacks before you lay out the footprint of his house.

Reyenga: This would make the lot size about 75 feet wide about 130 feet long.

Youngblood: I think the engineer was asking that the setback at the current structure be 25 feet.

David Cook was present.

Cook: We took a look at the plat. The whole thing is oriented the exact same way. We are just rotating it 90 degrees. The side yard setback should be 5 feet because it is on the other street.

David Kunz was present.

Kunz: The existing house doesn't encroach into that does it?

Youngblood: I don't think it is 25 feet because technically that would be the right elevation of the current house. I don't know what the distance is to the road but aren't messing with the current house.

Askew-Brown: The house would encroach.

Vercher: Was the house surveyed on that plat?

Reyenga: It would be 18 feet off of Lewis and 25 feet off of Mitchell.

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

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

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

(G)PRELIMINARY HEARINGS

4. **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)

Jake Overton was present.

Overton: I am trying to change the zoning of the lot to build an office complex.

Reyenga: What is this lot next to?

Mayor Horton: I don't think it is next to anything. It is near a wooded area that sits behind the fire station. There used to be some horses back there.

Vercher: What is directly across the street at Third?

Reyenga: It's vacant and overgrown.

Mayor Horton: I did contact the alderman for that district, Mrs. Carr. She is ok with it. What type of offices do you anticipate?

Overton: A tax office or an attorney or something like that.

Vercher: Looking at your site plan, what are you going to do on Third Street?

Overton: There is landscaping there.

Vercher: How does this fit into our new land use map?

Askew-Brown: The land use plan designates it as residential high density. It will have to be amended when it is updated if this is approved.

Vercher: What is allowed in a B-1?

Askew-Brown: Office, park, playground, conveyant homes, art gallery, antique store, pharmacy, library, finance office...

Vercher: Those are very neighborhood compatible.

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

A motion to approve the application to move to a public hearing was made by Reyenga and seconded by Kauffer.

5. **BP-18-22** – The application of River Ranch Acres Company, LLC, requesting a Preliminary Plat, Belmere Unit No. 7, being 17.892 acres more or less, located in Section 4, Township 19 North, Range 13 West, Bossier Parish, Louisiana. (Police Jury District 3)

Chris Myers was present.

Kauffer: Can you give us an update on some of the unresolved issues?

Myers: What we have done is we have a 24 inch pipe on the lots between 235 and 236 and it is approximately 4 feet deep. The other drainage servitude between lot 242 and 243 is going to be a 30 inch pipe and it is approximately 4 feet 9 inches



deep. We had the approval from Black Bayou Reservoir for the canal. I think those were the two items that Eric requested. We will make sure the inlets can handle the water. We will have at least five or six inlets with that 30 inch pipe and three with the 24 inch pipe. We don't have a completed storm drainage yet for that.

Vercher: What do you need to do to get it?

Myers: We have to finish the plans.

Vercher: When this was heard before, we had a packed house. The main concern of the people here was the drainage. We were told the drainage would be handled.

Myers: We are minimizing the drainage. There is some drainage that goes to the south of the property. There is some drainage that goes to Bay Hills North Unit 2-A. It is already going that way so we are going to minimize that so it will actually be less on the south and that neighbor there.

Vercher: I just want you to be prepared for it for when this is a public hearing. Those people will be back.

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

A motion to approve the application for public hearing was made by Kauffer and seconded by Reyenga.

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

6. **T-7-22** – The application of Ryan Estess, Raley and Associates, requesting a Zoning Amendment to change to the zoning classification of a tract of land being 5.683 acres, more or less, from R-A (Residence Agriculture District) to R-1 (One-Family Residence District) located in Section 20, Township 20 North, Range 20 West, for a proposed residential subdivision, North Benton Heights. (north and south of Palmetto Place Apartments) (Town Council District 1) (Police Jury District 3)

Ryan Estess was present.

Reyenga: This doesn't go as far as the Pumping Station Road does it?

Estess: It stops just short of Lincoln which just short of where it turns into Pump Station Road.

Vercher: That is a city street. You have city water and city sewer. We just need to check the box that the city is good with capacity.

Estess: The town has told us they are working through that.

Kunz: We looked at it. There is sewer lift station on the corner at Lincoln and there is water that stops at the apartment complex on North Sibley. It doesn't go all the way up to Lincoln Street. I would recommend that the development eventually tie those two water lines together. I think Phase 1 is 21 lots. That is about 5 gallons per minute flow and it can handle that.

Vercher: One thing that bothers me Ryan is where is your masterplan?

Estess: This property is unique. Half of this is in the city. The other half is outside the city. We were directed to apply for what is inside the town limits. I am looking at annexing that remainder into the town. For now, this is our masterplan.

Reyenga: There is a draw on the left side of North Sibley as you drive out going north.

Estess: A ditch?

Reyenga: It's a draw. On the right side it is a draw. On the left side, this would only go about 158 feet deep. The wooded property behind it would go to the overpass?

Estess: Everything on this property flows north.

Reyenga: Behind this 158 feet, the wooded property that goes to Highway 3, that I assume is running with the overpass. That is totally wooded property behind this on the left going north to Highway 3. Would the wooded property behind lots 17, 16, 15, and 14 abut all the way to the overpass?

Estess: Everything in that area is draining towards the north.

Reyenga: Before you get to the bridge, that all holds water.

Estess: That area is low back there. At this point we are not doing anything with that.

Vercher: Have you checked your FEMA maps?

Estess: No flood zones.

Reyenga: Will they totally clear this property on each side or will they be doing some landscaping?

Estess: We have not talked about that. Typically on lots like these, we will have to cut some trees.

Vercher: Do you have covenants?

Estess: We do. They were not required for the zoning submittal. They will be included with the preliminary plat submittal.

Vercher: Will these be site built or modular homes?

Estess: Site built.

Reyenga: My biggest concern would be the drainage.

Estess: We will be sure to address all of the drainage issues with Mr. Kunz. We are going to work with the Town at each step to make sure that this project goes seamlessly as possible. If the water stops at the apartment complex, we have no choice but to extend the water line down to the 8 inch main at Lincoln Street. We will get with David and make sure all of that is addressed properly.

Vercher: Are you planning to continue the open ditches?

Estess: Yes.

Reyenga: Will there be concrete drive to the homes?

Estess: Yes with a culvert underneath.

Vercher: What about street lights?

Mayor Horton: They are very sparse up there. Since that area doesn't presently have street lights, I don't know how we'd require a development coming in to...

Reyenga: Are you saying we can't have streetlights? That is a dark area where it stops after the apartments.

Estess: There are some existing utilities out there. We will look into mounting a pole light. They usually run about 250 feet. We will go ahead and take look at those. It is all overhead electric out there right now.

Reyenga: The Town of Benton Subdivision Code says that the utility lines shall be underground.

Mayor Horton: The electricity is already there.

Reyenga: I am just trying to make sure it is well lit out there.

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

A motion to approve the application for a public hearing was made by Reyenga and seconded by Kauffer.

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

#### (H) REGULAR MEETING

##### 7. Approval of Minutes

- a. A motion to approve the July 11, 2022 minutes was made by Reyenga and seconded by Kauffer.

The motion passed unanimously.

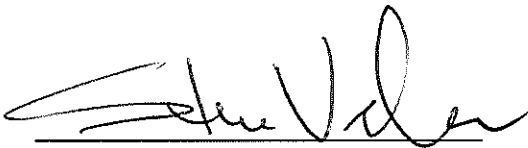
##### 8. Old Business

##### 9. New Business

Carlotta Askew-Brown stated that budget season is coming up and she would be scheduling a budget meeting soon.

##### 10. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 7:37 pm.

  
Steve Vercher, Vice Chairman