

## BENTON PARISH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

### MINUTES

Monday, August 7, 2023 – 6:00 P.M.

Benton Town Hall  
105 Sibley Street  
Benton, LA 71006

#### MEMBERS

#### PRESENT:

Martha Reyenga  
Steve Vercher  
Bryan Kauffer  
Jerry Nuckolls

#### OTHERS PRESENT:

Carlotta Askew Brown  
Carolina Zet Blunck  
Jayme Gilmour  
America Martin  
Robert Thomas  
Jason Westerman  
Mayor Horton  
James Friday  
Ron Jones

#### MEMBERS ABSENT:

Michael Jorgenson

- (A) Martha Reyenga called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- (B) The invocation was led by Bryan Kauffer.
- (C) Pledge of Allegiance was led by Steve Vercher.
- (D) Jayme Gilmour called roll and stated a quorum was present.
- (E) Carlotta Askew-Brown requested that item #1, BP-12-23 be removed from the agenda.

A motion was made by Steve Vercher and seconded by Bryan Kauffer to remove item #1, BP-12-23 from the agenda.

A motion was made by Steve Vercher and seconded by Jerry Nuckolls to approve the amended agenda.

The motion carried unanimously.

#### (F) PUBLIC HEARINGS

- ~~1. BP-12-23 – The application of Randall Kilpatrick requesting a Final Plat approval for Kilpatrick Place Unit 3, being 9.996 acres, more or less, located in Section 33, Township 20 North, Range 13 West, (Located on Cummings Drive, east of Cattleman's Trail, Bossier Parish, Louisiana. (Police Jury District 3)~~

*Item was removed from the agenda.*

2. T-05-23 – The application of America Martin, requesting a Zoning Amendment to change the zoning classification of a certain tract of land being .0275 acres more or less, from B-2 (Neighborhood Business District) to B-3 (Community and Central Business District) located in the southwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 31, Township 20 North, Range 13 West, municipally known as 6382

Askew-Brown: They cannot be in the right-of-way. DOTD was good with this. They are just waiting to process the permit.

Vercher: Did they require a divider?

Reyenga: I have a question about the parking and what required and what is available. Has that been resolved?

Martin: Yes.

Reyenga: Who resolved that?

Martin: The owner. We talked to the owner.

Robert Thomas was present.

Thomas: At the last meeting, someone was asking a question about the parking overlapping into Trejo's. I went and talked to them. He said he had some problems with the last tenant. He does not have a problem with us utilizing his lot to go back and forth. We assured him we would not be parking there.

Reyenga: The north side where it abuts Campbell's property, that will not encroach over into Campbell's property on the north side?

Thomas: Yes. They told us where to put this sign up after we are through painting. We are all in agreement with that.

Askew-Brown: We requested an updated site plan that shows the accurate amount of parking. We have not received that yet. We will not be able to issue a Certificate of Occupancy until we get that. It needs to be dimensioned where we can see the parking stalls to be 10' x 20's. It needs to be to scale and the parking spaces shown. You will need to have someone draft it for you.

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

A motion to approve T-5-23 with the condition that the applicant submit a dimensioned site plan prior to receiving a Certificate of Occupancy was made by Kauffer. The motion was seconded by Vercher.

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

## (G)PRELIMINARY HEARINGS

1. T-06-23 – The application of COLBCAR, LLC for a Zoning Amendment to change the zoning classification of a certain tract of land being 2.77 acres, more or less, from R-1 (One Family Resident Districts) to B-3 (Community and Central Business Districts), located in Section 30, Township 20 North, Range 12 West, Bossier Parish, Louisiana. (Town Council District 3) (Police

Vercher: Where is this in relation to...

Reyenga: It is right down the street here. It may still have a Bonomo sign on it. It is before you get to Mr. Jones' house. That is not the entire piece of property? Is it just the frontage?

Westerman: We are asking to rezone the entire frontage. My client intends to buy the whole block. We will have to come back to get the rest of it rezoned.

Vercher: Is there going to be a common driveway?

Westerman: We prefer that. We do not know yet. We are working with DOTD. It might be a right in, right out situation.

Vercher: Southbound, you have the middle turn lane. Northbound, they will make you put in a turn lane.

Reyenga: The way I read this, they are wanting an entrance or exit on Red River and Cleveland. There would not be a turn lane on Highway 3.

Vercher: I am just looking at the exhibits. It shows a common drive down the center which means to me they have a shared driveway. Is that what we are talking about? You do not have anything firm with DOTD as far as access. If they do not give you the common drive, have you had any discussions with the Town of Benton on utilizing their residential streets for 18 wheelers coming in with lots of merchandise?

Westerman: The town engineer has a copy of this. I have not gotten any comments back from him.

Vercher: In my experience, it is not the customer that causes any problems with traffic. They come and go in small groups. It is the 18 wheelers delivering all of the merchandise everyday that is causing the turn-around problems. If you are going to use those town roads, I doubt that they were intended to be used for that kind of traffic.

Westerman: Both of those stores have a delivery schedule of once a week.

Vercher: That is what they tell you but that is not what they do.

Reyenga: Are the businesses facing Cleveland and Red River Street?

Westerman: The Auto Zone entrance will be facing north. The Dollar Tree entrance will be facing south.

Reyenga: What will the storefront be facing?

Westerman: The interior.

Reyenga: When you go down Highway 3, you will see it from the side, correct?

Westerman: It is just an auto parts store.

Vercher: Getting the trucks in and out is usually an issue for the town.

Mayor Horton was present.

Mayor Horton: I have three concerns. Our streets in town are rated 9 ton. Everyone knows what 18 wheelers do to streets when they start turning. We are concerned about the streets Cleveland and Red River. On Red River, there is a main drainage that comes through about where the exit is they are showing on Red River. It is a major drainage artery. It goes through the rear of that property. There is a lot of water that comes through there. It flows from the west to the east. I am concerned that any tampering right there would mess the flow up. Anything that would interrupt the flow of that water would be an issue. That is a concern that the drainage is maintained in the proper form so it is not restricted. I did not see any plans for buffering. This is going to be a little bit residential as you move back to the back part of it. I am concerned about any type of light pollution. If you would take these concerns into consideration. I welcome new businesses. We just need to protect our residents and our infrastructure.

Reyenga: The drainage starts across the road. That is why the ditches are so deep on the home across on Red River.

Mayor Horton: There are large culverts that come under the railroad tracks coming from Oakridge, flow that way and go all through that property. It is like white water rafting through there.

Reyenga: I wondered about the 18 wheelers coming in on Red River and Cleveland turning in if streets were behind. I did not think those roads were wide enough for an 18-wheeler to swing in there.

Mayor Horton: The roads were not engineered for 18-wheeler traffic. Even a good engineered road, when you start twisting on it and making turns, you present a problem with asphalts. That back streets looks like it is right on top of that drainage culvert. All of these things need consideration and some answers about how to move forward.

James Friday was present.

Friday: The water draining to the lake... what would we do if we had a chemical spill on that lot there?

Mayor Horton: We have so many chemical trucks going up and down Highway 3, it would be the same result.

Friday: We would be increasing the potential for that with vehicles and trucks coming into that parking lot. I am just curious how we could stop any kind of damage to our lake or our water. Things could happen and I am just curious what could be done if it does happen.

Westerman: There will definitely be a third lot.

Vercher: In order to move this to a public hearing, I think we need to know if we have common center road going in or are we going to use city streets?

Westerman: We will be using city streets no matter what. That is how they want the tie-ins on Red River. The center turn lane depends on DOTD>

Vercher: I think you should be talking to the town and their engineer about what is going to be needed so your client can understand what costs are going to be incurred for this zoning to happen. Whether it be drainage or street upgrades.

Westerman: Did they not get copies of this? I have not gotten any comments back from the city engineers.

Vercher: I think you should work through that before we put this on an agenda for a public hearing. There are so many unknowns that have not been worked thought. Let's just say there are a million dollars' worth of improvements that will be needed. Who will pay for that?

Westerman: Well, I was under the impression that there would have been comments from the town. I submitted this last month at the deadline. I would think that before the next public hearing if we have not worked though these issues, we would just have to pull it off of the agenda. We should know before the public hearing whether or not we can move forward.

Vercher: Normally, with this type of development, you are going to have roads, drainage, utilities, water lines, sewer. All of these improvements will have to be worked through. Sometimes the town will pay a little. Sometimes they do not. That has to be figured in the way the figure out how they will get their money back. That need to be worked out before we can approve this.

Westerman: We hope to have all of that worked out before the next public meeting.

Reyenga: I wonder when you move a street from a 9000-pound limit to a 20,000-pound limit... that is what a trailer will be with an 18-wheeler...

Vercher: It is going to be a 25-foot concrete road. It is not going to be an asphalt, residential street.

Reyenga: I do not think there is room unless they start utilizing some of it because you have a home on this side, a home on this side, and on this side the ditch is so deep. It is the main one carrying the drainage out. Is it open where that drain starts? I know it is open on the other piece of property. Is it open or under the ground?

Mayor Horton: It is open on Red River. There are some diagonal cross culverts that go across there and go to that lot. Then it picks up open ditch drainage where we are talking about. It flows through that lot and back to Lee Street.

Westerman: I have the questions that we need answered. I think we can get these answered.

Kauffer: I cannot support going forward with a public hearing with those things not even being discussed.

Askew-Brown: We have a responsibility to move this forward and it is up to him to bring us this information. If he does not have it then we will not hear it or we can delay it. We do need to move it forward.

Westerman: I have worked with these guys on over 50 stores. They are pretty responsive on getting comments back in a timely manner to know if they can move forward. Building two city streets is not in the budget.

Askew-Brown: You moving this forward is not saying that you approve this. It just gives them the opportunity and the motivation to provide the additional information that you have required.

Vercher: Hear me out. If I make a motion to move this forward it seems like it would have to be contingent on DOTD driveway approval as well as the Town of Benton's approval on all agreements for infrastructure improvements on the city streets, Red River and Cleveland Streets. There will be significant cost and we need to know who is going to pay for it... New city streets, lighting... We do not have a master plan of what they are wanting to build. We have an idea of what they want to build but we don't know what they want to build on that back piece.

Westerman: It could be ten years from now before they build anything back there.

Doane: Should this be a subdivision plat?

Askew-Brown: They did not want to move forward with that without the zoning.

Doane: All of the things that Steve has talked about sound like something that would have be relative to a subdivision plat or a detailed site plan.

Vercher: We do not have a master plan and you all do not have an agreement or an idea of what the Town of Benton and the developer want to do together to accomplish what has to happen. If we move it forward, it will be contingent on all of those things being resolved.

Westerman: I understand. As far as the master plan goes, we would have done that but we don't have an idea of what is going back there. We could draw some office buildings and some parking back there but...

Vercher: Let's do that then.

Askew-Brown: I did not want them to fluff if they did not have any ideas. I did not feel comfortable rezoning the piece of property without them having the use especially with the residents back there.

Vercher: How can we enforce a buffer when all they have is their private street?

Askew-Brown: Which buffer?

Westerman: DOTD asked about the back piece. We just did not want to be tied down to something when we do not know... it is definitely going to be some type of commercial development. I think we can get the answers to these questions before our next meeting. We should know pretty quick once we meet with the town. I would like to move forward and schedule this for a public hearing.

Reyenga: I think we have always known that there would be some type of commercial development here at some point. I am not against business coming into Benton. I think something of this nature would have fit better on the north side of the service station in front of the dollar store down the road. Maybe office buildings could have been on these streets without all of the 18-wheeler traffic.

Mayor Horton: Those streets will not accommodate this development in their present condition. They are not built for this.

Ron Jones was present.

Jones: I don't think the neighbors would like this even if the streets could accommodate the 18 wheelers if they have trucks coming in front of their houses at 2:00 in the morning to load and unload on Red River and Cleveland.

Westerman: I am asking for the opportunity to get this resolved before next meeting.

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

A motion was made by Vercher to approve T-06-23 for a public hearing contingent upon town approval regarding neighboring streets, cost sharing agreements for improvements, and DOTD approval for access. The motion was seconded by Nuckolls.

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

## (H) REGULAR MEETING

### 2. Approval of Minutes

- a. A motion to approve the July 10, 2023 minutes was made by Nuckolls and seconded by Vercher.

The motion passed unanimously.

### 3. Old Business

### 4. New Business

Askew Brown stated that she is working on the 2024 budget and will have something for the board to review soon.

Adjourn