TOWN OF BENTON

REGULAR SESSION
MINUTES
MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMAN
105 SIBLEY ST., BENTON, LA
SEPTEMBER 14, 2026, 6:30 PM

The Town of Benton met in a regular session on the 14th day of September at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers Benton Town Hall, 105 Sibley Street, Benton, Louisiana. Mayor James Friday called the meeting to order. Alderman Perry gave the invocation, and Alderman Manning led the Pledge of Allegiance. Debbie Rios, Administrative Assistant, called the roll with all members as follows:

Alderman Jacqueline Neal Carr	PRESENT	
Alderman Tiffany Manning	PRESENT	
Alderman Tammy Brunson	ABSENT	(Called/Sick)
Alderman Arshundae Perry	PRESENT	
Alderman Terry Lawrence	PRESENT	

Others present included Stephanie Collier, CAO, Robert Gonzalez, Deputy Clerk, Chief Collier, Deputy Chief Bates, Asst. Chief Weaver, Lt. Mora and members of the public.

REGULAR SESSION AGENDA APPROVAL TO TABLE ORDINANCES 632 and 633:
Alderman Perry made a motion, seconded by Alderman Lawrence, to table Ordinances 632 (the handbook) and 633 (per diem). Mayor Friday called for comments:

Atty. Murphy commented on Ordinance 633. He stated that the terms of this ordinance can be passed, but it would become effective at the start of the next term. He also stated that the ordinance needs to be tightened up. So, I agree with the motion to table.

Ken Shiflett addressed the council stating, "I'm the one that brought this up. Me. Because every day I wake up and I go to work. If I don't go to work, I don't get a paycheck. I'm pretty sure most of the constituency in here is the same way; they don't go to work; they don't get paid. It's kind of like a basic principle. Now that we've got new information from the Attorney General, they may update it and give us a newer 30-year view of their opinion. It just doesn't make sense that we don't show up to work but still get a paycheck. And literally two months ago we stood up and said, 'Hey, we need more money. Give us more money' for sitting up here once or twice a month and then not showing up for an entire month. Now

I know as an elected official-that just means that everybody in your neighborhood pays you to represent them-this ain't like a king's chair…where you're like sitting as a king. You work for the people in your district or your neighborhood. So, we expect you to come in and go to work just like we do. You know, it's just a slap in the face to the residents, the citizens of the town, the voters and just regular residents that aren't voting people, to come in and say, 'Hey, I'm not going to show up AND I want a raise'. It was awesome that you lowered the amount of compensation, bonus points on those, but seems like it should have just stayed where it was because half of us-or two fifths of us aren't always coming in. And I think the Attorney General should be able to put on there that like hey, if you have a medical issue, like you're at the doctor, your kid's sick and you got a doctor's note, sure, we all have families, we all got kids, we all got responsibilities so if you miss a meeting due to an illness or something like that, that makes a lot of sense. But just not showing up and then telling people like, 'hey, I'm working'. OK, well if you're working, they you have a list of emails, maybe a list of people who've stopped by your home, like maybe railroad tracks…have something fixed…there should be a list of people or a call log if not. If not, at minimum, a bunch of emails going back and forth from you folks. Thank you for hearing me". **Ms. Carr:** "Let me stop you right there. I do email the town attorney. We back and forth all the time okay".

Mayor called for any other comments. There being none, the following votes were recorded to table Ordinances 632 and 633:

AYES: Alderman Carr, Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, Alderman Lawrence
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Alderman Brunson
ABSTAIN: None

REGULAR SESSION AGENDA APPROVAL:
A motion was made by Alderman Lawrence and seconded by Alderman Carr to approve the agenda. Mayor called for comment. There being none, the following votes were recorded:

AYES: Alderman Carr, Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, Alderman Lawrence
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Alderman Brunson
ABSTAIN: None

MINUTES: August Public Hearing and Special Session
A motion was made by Alderman Manning and seconded by Alderman Lawrence to approve the August Public Hearing, Agenda, and Special Session minutes. Mayor Friday called for comments and **Ms. Manning** raised one. She requested the minutes for the Null and Void August 25,2026 Special Session meeting. **Atty. Murphy** Advised he had given a legal opinion to the entire board as well as the mayor on that reminding if it was declared null and void then the minutes don't matter because it's an invalid meeting. Mayor called for any other questions. There being none, the following votes were recorded:

AYES: Alderman Perry, Alderman Lawrence
NAYS: Alderman Carr, Alderman Manning
ABSENT: Alderman Brunson
ABSTAIN: None
*Mayor stated he breaks the tie voting YES.

OLD BUSINESS: ORDINANCE 631 OF 2026: Vote to overturn the veto

Mayor asked Debbie Rios to read aloud for the record:
AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 613 OF 2025, THE FINANCIAL BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 FOR THE TOWN OF BENTON, LOUISIANA IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOUISIANA LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET ACT

Mayor called for public comments. Mrs. Collier explained that a spreadsheet in your packets shows what has changed. Manning asked Mrs. Collier to identify the exact changes in the budget. The council reviewed the changes. The mayor reminded council that this is a vote to overturn the veto. There being none, he asked for a motion and second. A motion was made by Alderman Lawrence and seconded by Alderman Carr to vote to override the veto of Ordinance 631. Mayor called for council comments. Mayor called for roll call vote. The following votes were recorded:

AYES: Alderman Carr
NAYS: Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, Alderman Lawrence
ABSENT: Alderman Brunson
ABSTAIN: None
*Veto override fails. Mayor asked for the count. Atty. Murphy stated 3/1. After explanation and clarity, Alderman Carr changed her vote to NO. **Therefore, the count is 4/0 to not override the veto of Ordinance 631.**

ORDINANCE 632 of 2026: Mayor requests to table this item

AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING AND APPROVING THE TOWN OF BENTON EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK; AUTHORIZING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HANDBOOK; AND PROVIDING FOR RELATED MATTERS.

NEW BUSINESS:
Judy Moncrief, CPA
Town Auditor
2025 Audit Report

Ms. Moncrief came forward and asked if anyone had any questions regarding the financial statements from June 26, 2026. She advised overall the town was actually in good shape. She noted there was only one finding in audit and that was where a former bookkeeper was found to have taken/used some reward credits for personal use. That was the only finding. She asked without some of the council not having the financial statements in front of them, what in general would they be interested in understanding? Mayor asked if the presentation she gave in the summary of the budget given back in the summer had been mailed to Baton Rouge? She answered, "Yes, to the Legislative Auditor". He asked if we had gotten any response back from them? She answered, "No". He asked if during the course of the audit if she was able to find any misuse of funds or funds that were transferred illegally after bank statements had been reconciled. She answered "No. I investigated and did not see any evidence or find any support of that claim and I reported that back to the Legislative Auditors". She added, "There was, however a different finding of, like I said, a former bookkeeper had been using reward points for personal use to buy personal items. But, that was the only thing that was found". The mayor asked, "How was that found? Was it found through PMI, who discovered or did you discover this"? She replied it was prior to her.

Ms. Carr asked if she was employed by PMI on their audit to which she responded, no. Ms. Carr also asked if she had looked at their forensic audit and she again stated no. Ms. Moncrief said her understanding to what they did was to try and clean up the books like there were checks that had carried over year after year and what they did was mostly clear all that out and make sure they were closed correctly. She stated she was not a part of that. Mayor explained the checks in subject went back to 2019 or farther. PMI was reconciling them, cleaning them up, straightening them-and he wasn't sure why it hadn't been done sooner but it has been corrected. Ms. Moncrief shared that it had been corrected by the time she had worked with it and never saw the uncorrected information. Mayor ended by stating that as we are right now, we are in good standing with our accounts and Ms. Moncrief agreed. MS. Carr asked the Mayor how were those checks disposed of? Stephanie explained they were vendor checks they were never cashed or water deposits we had sent back to the owner and sent back with no forwarding address and just sat in the safe for years. Because technically still on the books they were sent to the state as unclaimed property; they handle that.

Mayor called for any other comments or questions for Ms. Judy. There being none, Ms. Moncrief thanked the council and advised they could contact her with anything about the matter anytime.

Ordinance 634 of 2026: Introduce and set for public hearing
Mayor asked Debbie Rios to read aloud for the record.

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE 591 of 2024 BY AMENDING THE RATE TO BE CHARGED FOR RESIDENTIAL GARBAGE SERVICE FOR THE TOWN OF BENTON TO CONSUMERS INSIDE THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF BENTON

TOWN OF BENTON

Mayor Friday began summarizing from the copy of the letter in council packet from Ecowaste Solutions regarding the new rate increase adjustment for solid waste removal fiscal year 2026.

Mayor asked Debbie Rios to read the following Ordinance 634 aloud for the record:

ORDINANCE 634 OF 2026

GARBAGE RATES SCHEDULE

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE 591 of 2024 BY AMENDING THE RATE TO BE CHARGED FOR RESIDENTIAL GARBAGE SERVICE FOR THE TOWN OF BENTON TO CONSUMERS INSIDE THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF BENTON

BE IT ORDAINED BY the board of aldermen of the Town of Benton, Bossier Parish, Louisiana, in regular session convened, to amend Ordinance 591 of 2024 by amending the rate to be charged to inside residential customers for garbage service provided by the Town of Benton, and

WHEREAS the rate to be charged to inside residential customers for a single garbage can shall be twenty-four dollars and zero cents ($24.00) per month, the rate to be charged for residential customers who request a second garbage can shall be thirty-five dollars and zero cents ($35.00) per month. Garbage service shall be billed to inside customers as a line item listed on the monthly utility bill sent from the Town of Benton.

WHEREAS, the Town may grant an exception to the mandatory garbage service requirement for residential properties that are vacant and unoccupied for an extended period of time, provided the property owner submits a written request and receives approval from the Town.

WHEREAS to qualify for this exemption:

1. The property must be a privately owned residence that is vacant and not occupied by any person.
2. The property shall not be used as a rental property, leased residence, short-term rental, vacation rental, Airbnb, VRBO, or any similar transient lodging arrangement.
3. Water service may remain active at the owner's request while the property is vacant.

105 Sibley Street / P O Box 1390
Benton, Louisiana 71006
(318) 965-2781 / (318)965-2577 fax
www.townofbentonlouisiana.webs.com website

A person with a disability who requires assistance with accommodations or an auxiliary aid or service such as an assistive listening device or a sign language interpreter, to participate in a public meeting should contact the Stephanie Collier at (318) 965-2781 as far in advance as possible, but no later than forty-eight (48) hours prior to the scheduled time of the meeting.

The Town of Benton is an equal opportunity employer.

4. Upon approval, the Town shall remove and retain the garbage container until service is reinstated.
5. Properties receiving this exemption shall not be eligible for curbside yard waste, grass clipping, leaf, limb, or brush collection services provided by the Town.
6. The property owner shall notify the Town when the property becomes occupied. At that time, the Town shall reinstate garbage service for a $25.00 reinstatement fee, and all applicable fees shall resume.
7. The Town reserves the right to inspect or otherwise verify vacancy status and to revoke the exemption if the property is found to be occupied or used in a manner that disqualifies it from the exemption.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED this Ordinance having been read in full in legal session, and considered section by section, A motion by Alderman - seconded by Alderman - to introduce Ordinance 634 of 2026 and set for public hearing and adopted on October 12, 2026 by the following votes.

Mayor Friday mentioned that a rate increase came in last year, but we did not ask customers for an increase; the town just absorbed it. This year the town cannot. He noted we cannot do anything until their contract runs out next year but we are asking for a renewal of the Ordinance for the price increase. He asked for public comments. There being none a motion was made by Alderman Carr and seconded by Alderman Lawrence to introduce and set for public hearing Ordinance 634 of 2026. Mayor called for council comments. **Ms. Manning** had a question concerning the name change of the company and was advised it was the same company but the name changed from Live Oak to Ecowaste. Also, **Atty. Murphy** pointed out that in order to reflect the increase of $1.00 added to the current fee of $10.00 for a second can there was a possible typo in the ordinance, which there was, and it was corrected in the second paragraph of ordinance, the first can is $24.00 per month and the second can is $35.00.

Mayor called for any other comments. There being none, the following votes were recorded:

YEAS: Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, Alderman Lawrence
NAYS: Alderman Carr
ABSENT: Alderman Brunson
ABSTAIN: None

A person with a disability who requires assistance with accommodations or an auxiliary aid or service such as an assistive listening device or a sign language interpreter, to participate in a public meeting should contact the Stephanie Collier at (318) 965-2781 as far in advance as possible, but no later than forty-eight (48) hours prior to the scheduled time of the meeting.

The Town of Benton is an equal opportunity employer.

TOWN OF BENTON

Resolution 7 of 2026: A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE SERVICE CONTRACT FOR IT SERVICES, INTERNET, AND PHONE SYSTEM FOR TOWN HALL

Mayor announced we had a representative, Michael Fowler, and a co-worker with him from Fuse.cloud here to answer questions about the paperwork included in packet. He addressed council and explained they were here tonight to ask for the town's approval for them to handle the town's IT, internet, and phone services. They would cover all core services just mentioned, predictable monthly costs, data security, back up reliability, modern phone system features, reliable fiber internet, and 24/7 technical support. They alone would replace and consolidate several of our fragmented providers of these services. **Ms. Manning** appeared glad due to current numerous scattered monthly financials. **Ms. Carr** asked if it covered police department too. Mr. Fowler said it did. Highlighted it was a 3-year contract. There were a lot of questions and answers along with highlights such as a 3-year contract, price and other comparable bids. **Kara Lowrie** from the public asked about being dedicated and the speed. Mr. Fowler explained it was a private fiber optic internet connection with a symmetrical speed of 250Mbps for both downloading and uploading.

A motion was made by Alderman Carr and seconded by Alderman Lawrence to approve the Resolution 7 of 2026. With there being no other comments made, the following votes were recorded:

AYES: Alderman Carr, Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, Alderman Lawrence
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Alderman Brunson
ABSTAIN: None

ORDINANCE 633 OF 2026: Mayor advised this had been tabled.
AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 622 OF 2026 RELATIVE TO COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL; PROVIDING THAT COMPENSATION SHALL BE PAID AS A PER DIEM FOR ACTUAL ATTENDANCE AT REGULARLY SCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETINGS

TOWN OF BENTON

Resolution 8 of 2026: A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE SERVICE CONTRACT FOR IN-CAR CAMERA SYSTEM FOR BENTON POLICE DEPARTMENT
Police Chief Collier stepped up to go over the Axon Enterprise ten-year quote summary included in packet. He explained that their current contract with another company was coming to an end and he wanted to get this presented and hopefully approved as to be included in next year's budget before the price goes up. $736.00 would be paid from the current budget to get them started this year. The price on the resolution of $150,763.30 was incorrectly listed as a ten-year quote when in fact that is the five-year quote. The resolution will be changed to reflect a price of $348,813.92 for the ten-year quote to match the paperwork in the council packet.

A motion was made by Alderman Lawrence and seconded by Alderman Carr to approve the ten-year contract with Axon with the correction being made to the Resolution for the price of $348,813.92. With no other comments being made, the following votes were recorded:

AYES: Alderman Carr, Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, Alderman Lawrence
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Alderman Brunson
ABSTAIN: None

Consider approval of the Month-to-date financials:
Mayor called for any comments. With there being none, a motion was made by Alderman Lawrence and seconded by Alderman Carr to approve the financials. Mayor called for any council comments. With there being none, the following votes were recorded:

AYES: Alderman Carr, Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, Alderman Lawrence
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Alderman Brunson
ABSTAIN: None

ADJOURN Regular Session
A motion was made by Alderman Carr and seconded by Alderman Lawrence to adjourn the meeting.
All In favor 4
All Opposed 0
Adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

105 Sibley Street / P O Box 1390
Benton, Louisiana 71006
(318) 965-2781 / (318)965-2577 fax
www.townofbentonlouisiana.webs.com website

A person with a disability who requires assistance with accommodations or an auxiliary aid or service such as an assistive listening device or a sign language interpreter, to participate in a public meeting should contact the Stephanie Collier at (318) 965-2781 as far in advance as possible, but no later than forty-eight (48) hours prior to the scheduled time of the meeting.

The Town of Benton is an equal opportunity employer.