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**PUBLIC HEARING
MINUTES
TOWN OF BENTON COUNCIL
105 SIBLEY STREET, BENTON
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2026, 6:30 PM**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Town of Benton met in a regular legal session on the 9th day of February 2026 at 6:30 PM in the Benton Council Chambers, Benton Town Hall, 105 Sibley Street, Benton, Louisiana. Mayor James Friday called the meeting to order. Alderman Carr gave the invocation, and Alderman Brunson led the Pledge of Allegiance. Stephanie Collier called the roll with all members as follows:

Alderman Jackie Carr	PRESENT
Alderman Tiffany Manning	PRESENT
Alderman Tammy Brunson	PRESENT
Alderman Arshundae Perry	ABSENT
Alderman Terry Lawrence	PRESENT

Others present were Deborah Rios, Officer Cesar Mora, Attorney Nerren, and members of the public. A motion was made by Alderman Carr and seconded by Alderman Lawrence to approve the Public Hearing Agenda. Mayor Friday called for public comments. There being none; the following votes were recorded:

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

Attorney Nerren asked Alderman Manning if she wished to hold an executive session. He stated that it can be held now or at the end of the meeting. Alderman Manning stated she wished to hold it now. A motion by Alderman Manning, seconded by Alderman Carr, to amend the agenda to add an Executive Session. Mayor Called for Public Comments: None were made. The following votes were recorded:

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

A motion by Manning, seconded by Alderman Carr, to enter the executive session. Mayor Called for Public Comments: None were made. The following votes were recorded:

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

Mayor Friday asked everyone to exit the council chambers except the council members, mayor, Stephanie Collier, and himself; everyone else will be called back in upon conclusion of the Executive Session. Attorney Nerren asked that all recording devices and cameras be turned off.

The executive session was concluded, and the public was invited back into the council chambers at 8:25 PM. Stephanie Collier excused herself from the meeting.

Ron Jones commented on the length of the council's executive session and felt it was wrong to make people wait outside for almost two hours.

Mayor Friday resumed the public hearing asked Debbie Rios to read the following ordinances aloud for the record:

ORDINANCE 615 OF 2026: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 613 OF 2025 AND AMENDING THE 2026 GENERAL FUND BUDGET

Whereas, the Town of Benton, Louisiana has prepared and submitted a General Fund budget for Fiscal Year 2026 in accordance with applicable states statutes and local charter requirements; and

Whereas, the Town Council has reviewed and approved the 2026 General Fund budget on December 15,2025; and

Whereas, the Town Council finds it necessary and appropriate to make certain amendments to the proposed budget to better reflect the financial needs and priorities of the Town;

Now, therefore be it ordained by the Town Council of Benton, Louisiana, as follows:

The purpose of this ordinance is to amend the Town of Benton 2026 General Fund budget by adjusting expenditures as outlined herein.

The proposed fiscal year 2026 budget is hereby amended as follows;

Adjustments to Expenditures:

Decrease General Admin Dept 100-5000 (Salaries and Wages) at \$92,000.00 for a revised total of \$89,800.00.

Be it further ordained the Board of Alderman of the Town of Benton, Louisiana, finds and determine that this amendment to the budget applies with all requirements set forth in the State of Louisiana Local Government Budget Act R.S. 39:1301-1315.

Mayor Friday explained that the heading that was read is the same on the next five ordinances and asked if it would be alright for Debbie to just read it that once. No objections noted. Mayor called for public comments. **Manning:** "Based on Stephanie stating that she agreed to the decrease, I just want to make that known." **Mayor:** "OK."

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ORDINANCE 617 OF 2026: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 613 OF 2025 AND AMENDING THE 2026 GENERAL FUND BUDGET

Adjustments to Expenditures:

Increase Maintenance Dept 400-5310 (Vehicles-Fuel) at \$2,500.00 for a revised total of \$9,000.00.

Mayor Friday called for public comments. There being none.

ORDINANCE 618 OF 2026: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 613 OF 2025 ANDMENDING THE 2026 GENERAL FUND BUDGET

Adjustments to Expenditures:

Increase Council Dept 140-5760 (Travel Expense) at \$1,000.00 for a revised total of \$2,000.00.

Mayor Friday called for public comments. There being none.

ORDINANCE 619 OF 2026: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 613 OF 2025 ANDMENDING THE 2026 GENERAL FUND BUDGET

Adjustments to Expenditures:

Decreased General Admin Dept 100-5915 (Capital Outlay-Furniture) at \$500.00 for a revised total of \$0.00.

Mayor Friday called for public comments. **Chris Redford** approached the podium and stated, "I just wanted to ask as the public why you wanted to don't want to spend any money on office furniture? I've never known any organization that doesn't have an office furniture budget. Is there a reason why you don't want to have one "period"? **Mayor:** "You'll have to ask the alderman that proposed the ordinance." **Redford:** "Ms. Manning?" **Manning:** "Thank you for your comment." **Redford:** "Can I ask a question?" **Manning:** "Thank you for your comment." **Redford:** Thank you for being a good steward of our money Ms. Manning".

ORDINANCE 620 OF 2026: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 613 OF 2025 ANDMENDING THE 2026 GENERAL FUND BUDGET

Adjustments to Expenditures:

Increase Council Dept 140-5755 (Training) at \$500.00 for a revised total of \$1,500.00.

Mayor Friday asked for public comments. There being none.

ORDINANCE 621 OF 2026: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 613 OF 2025 ANDMENDING THE 2026 GENERAL FUND BUDGET

Adjustments to Expenditures:

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Decrease General Admin Dept. 100-5130 (Supplies-General) at \$6,500.00 for a revised total of \$4,500.00.

Decreased General Admin Dept 100-5140 (Supplies-Office) at \$6,000.00 for a revised total of \$3,500.00.

Mayor Friday asked for public comments. There being none.

ORDINANCE 616 OF 2026: ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN OF THE TOWN OF BENTON ESTABLISHING THE SALARIES OF MUNICIPAL OFFICERS

WHEREAS the Town of Benton is a municipality created under the laws of the State of Louisiana and adherent to the provisions of the Lawrason Act;

WHEREAS the Board of Aldermen for the Town of Benton desires to establish the annual salaries for the Mayor, Aldermen, and the Chief of Police;

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Aldermen for the Town of Benton, Louisiana:

SECTION 1. The Mayor of the Town of Benton, serving as a “full-time” Mayor and holding no outside employment, having been paid \$40,000.00, shall be increased to \$47, 060.00 annually.

SECTION 2. The Aldermen of the Town of Benton, each having been paid \$5,100.00, shall be increased to \$6,000.00 annually.

SECTION 3. The Chief of Police of the Town of Benton, having been paid \$58,240.00, shall be increased to \$62,400.00 annually.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED THAT if any provision or item of this Ordinance or the application thereof is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions, items, or applications of this Ordinance which can be given effect without the invalid provisions, items, or applications, and to this end, the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby declared severable.

SECTION 4. BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED THAT all Ordinances or part thereof in conflict are hereby repealed.

Mayor Friday called for any public comments. **Ron Jones:** “Yes, I do. When I was alderman years ago, I think we started out-and this has been a long time ago-at like \$300 bucks. If somebody wanted to increase, and we were told then, that we could increase it but it wouldn’t kick in until the next election. In other words, you can’t give yourself a raise. You can raise the alderman pay but it goes over to the next election cycle. And that’s in the Lawrason Act. At least it was. Now it may have been changed and that might be something your attorney may want to check. Otherwise, you could raise your salary every year. **Chance Nerren:** “I know that it applies to the mayor and I want to say it applies to all elected officials.” **Mayor:** “It does.” **Jones:** “I think it applies to all the elected officials, but it specifically says aldermen in that Act.” **Nerren:** “I know it applies to mayor, but I’ll double check. I can honestly probably pull it up real quick.” **Jones:** “And I’m not saying y’all don’t deserve a raise. I’m just saying it’s probably not going to be legal until you do it in the next election cycle. You can go ahead and say yes we want to give the next aldermen this raise and then if you’re elected in there, you’ll get this raise. If you’re not, you won’t.”

Mayor called for any other comments. **Shonta Neal:** “I have a question on the one that says a ‘decrease the general admin dept 100-5000 at \$92,000.00 for a revised total of \$89,800.00’.” **Mayor:** “Which one are we on?” **Nerren:** “Hold on one

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second, hold on, I messed this up. Let me ask you something-you signed in didn't you?" **Jones:** "I did." **Neal:** "I did not." **Nerren:** "If you don't mind, just sign in. I apologize. Just trying to keep everything straight". **Mayor:** "Which one are you talking about?" **Neal:** "I didn't have this. the 615. The decrease general admin dept 100-5000 (salary wages) \$92,000.00 for a revised total of \$89...who is included in that?" **Mayor:** "Pardon me?" **Neal:** "Who is included in that? The salary and wages for general admin. Who's all included in that?" **Mayor:** "That primarily was the police department." **Neal:** "No, this says 100. Police department would be 200." **Nerren:** "Hold on, hold on. You're talking about an ordinance we've already closed public comments on". **Neal:** "Oh, I wasn't sure. I thought y'all were reading them all together like back to back like that." **Nerren:** "This is 615. We've already closed the comments on' it. (Speaking to Mayor) Will you immediately have an answer at hand?" **Mayor:** "No." **Nerren:** "OK, lets table it. You discussed it in the workshop meeting I know but I'm going to have to cut you off on this one...." **Neal:** "You're fine. You're fine". **Nerren:** "The votes coming up". **Neal:** "I thought it was in my paper but by the time I looked up y'all were on to the next one. Y'all are on 622." **Nerren:** "We're on 616." **Jackie Carr:** "OK, I have something to say about the 616 Ordinance. On January the 12th that ordinance failed. And just the ordinance to introduce it. Because it failed, it needs to be re-introduced. We can't do a final vote on an ordinance that failed last month. And I did get the [inaudible 15:10] opinion and I printed it all out for you all." **Mayor:** "OK, so when we go into Regular Session it is listed as a Final Vote. But then if you read on down in there, it is listed as 'introduced and set for public hearing'." **Manning:** 'If it wasn't in this meeting on the 12th, I know it was voted down, but remember Terry (Lawrence)?" **Carr:** "So you can't just bring it back for a final vote when it was voted down. It needs to be introduced." **Manning:** [inaudible 16:47] You don't see it in the January or maybe the December meeting?" **Carr:** "It was on the January 12th meeting." **Nerren:** "OK, roll call vote I'm showing AYES: Brunson, Lawrence, NAYS: Carr and Manning, Ms Perry not being present, so it dies two to two. So, it should not be set for public hearing. But the remaining one should be r, right?" **Mayor:** "There's two portions of that. 622 for public hearing. **Nerren:**"622 is the ordinance that Ms. Carr presented; the one that's being introduced today. The one they're talking about is here, that's set for final vote. It was introduced on the 12th and shot down two to two having not passed the majority. So, we introduce but can't take a final vote until after it's introduced. So, probably just a typo but it needs to go to the introduction stage along with the one you're talking about-the 622 which is the language that Ms. Carr [inaudible 18:22]." **Mayor:** (To Debbie) "OK, so, this one, Ord 616, here needs to be worded 'reset for public hearing'." **Debbie Rios:** "OK." **Manning:** "Do we have to vote on that to be set to public hearing?" **Nerren:** "It's going to operate very similar to what Ms. Carr's is going to operate. You put it into re-introduction category and you take the same steps to get there." **Manning:** "We have to reintroduce it tonight?" **Nerren:** "You can. It was placed on the agenda as the final vote so it would require an amendment to [inaudible 19:48] reintroduce it that way." **Manning:** "But it's an effort [inaudible 19:58] because its not for a final vote, right? **Nerren:** "Yea, but it's a typo error maybe, if the goal was to re-introduce it. That's the question. So the goal is to reintroduce it, and if it's mislabeled on the agenda, all it would take would be an understanding of the board and an amendment of the agenda to put it in the reintroduction category. Basically, move it from the final vote to the reintroduction category." **Carr:** "You can amend the agenda to [inaudible 20:18]." **Nerren:** "Yes, that's what I'm saying. Amend it to pull it from final vote to the introduction stage. Similarly to the position yours is in, following the same steps". **Mayor:** "That would be in the regular session." **Nerren:** "Yes." **Mayor:** "Alright, so, that was the end of item number 7. So, we will now start the regular session agenda.

ADJOURN PUBLIC HEARING

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