



**TOWN OF BENTON
BOARD OF ALDERMAN
105 SIBLEY STREET
BENTON, LOUISIANA**

**PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2026 @ 6:45 PM**

The Town of Benton met in a regular legal session on the 10th day of March 2026 at 6:45 PM in the Benton Council Chambers, Benton Town Hall, 105 Sibley Street, Benton, Louisiana. Mayor James Friday called the PUBLIC HEARING meeting to order. Alderman Manning gave the invocation, and Alderman Lawrance led the Pledge of Allegiance. Debbie Rios called the roll with all members as follows:

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

Others present were Stephanie Collier, Attorney Joel Murphy, Chief Collier, Officer Mora, Officer Weaver, and members of the media and members of the public.

A motion by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Perry, to approve the Public Hearing agenda. Mayor Friday called for Comments. There being none, the following votes were recorded:

Ayes: Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, and Alderman Lawrence
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

Ordinance was read by Stephanie Collier

ORDINANCE 625 of 2026

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 461 OF 2008 SETTING THE SALARY OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN OF THE TOWN OF BENTON, LOUISIANA, FIXING THE MONTHLY SALARY AT \$725.00, AND REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH.

WHEREAS, the Town of Benton, Louisiana operates as a Lawrason Act municipality governed by the provisions of Louisiana Revised Statutes Title 33; and

WHEREAS La. R.S. 33:404.1 grants the Board of Aldermen the authority to fix the compensation of municipal officers, including the Aldermen, by ordinance; and

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WHEREAS the current monthly compensation for members of the Board of Aldermen is set at \$425.00; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Aldermen has determined that an adjustment in compensation is necessary to adequately reflect the time, duties, and responsibilities required of the office; and

WHEREAS, the Town has determined that the budget allows for this compensation adjustment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Town of Benton, Louisiana, in legal session convened, that:

SECTION 1. The monthly compensation for each member of the Board of Aldermen of the Town of Benton is hereby fixed at the sum of Seven Hundred Twenty-Five Dollars and No/100 (\$725.00) per month.

SECTION 2. This salary increase shall be effective upon sufficient funds have been appropriated in the Town's annual budget.

Mayor Friday called for Public Comments:

Ron Jones asked when the pay increase will be effective. Mr. Jones presented an opinion from the Attorney General's Office stating that if the pay of the board of aldermen, under the Lawrason act, is increased by ordinance in the middle of their term, when does the raise begin? The answer is, "Start of the next term." Manning asked where he got that information. He stated that you can change the ordinance, but it doesn't say that the pay starts right now. The mayor stated that we understand that once the budget has been amended to reflect the increase, it will be effective at that time. Mr. Jones suggested that they need to research before moving forward.

Manning requested the source of his information. Mr. Jones stepped away from the mic and could not hear his response.

Mr. Rex Moncrief with Bossier Watch cited RS Code 33:404.1, which states that the compensation of municipal officers is set by ordinance. The Board of Aldermen may increase the compensation of elected officials; however, the Board of Aldermen shall not reduce the compensation during the term for which he is elected. He stated so; if you go by that statute, it doesn't say you can't do it, therefore, they can.

Attorney Joel Murphy spoke about what his research revealed, and he understands that if it is not in the budget, you need to amend the budget. He feels that once the budget is amended, the pay raise will take effect 30 days after the budget increase is approved.

Mr. Shifflet commented that, from a common-sense business perspective, the proposed compensation increase is excessive relative to the time and duties performed by the Council. Also, based on his experience in the military and after making a few calculations to break it down to an hourly rate, he stated that the council would have to work 21.25 hours in a work week. Mr. Shifflet pointed out that the people who run for public office are elected to make the town better. So, my question is, are our board of

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aldermen really spending more than 21.25 hours a month working for the municipality? He also suggested that the council keep a log of the time they spend working. Mr. Shifflet stated that, based on the monthly work this council is currently doing, they are four hours short of one full work week and feel this increase is excessive.

Alderman Perry stated that, based on what she has researched, she asked the mayor to do his due diligence on this. I am reading and have read that it can't be increased during their current term. Manning asked where is she reading from. Alderman Perry stated the Lawrason act 33:4.1

Mayor Friday adjourned the Public Hearing

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**REGULAR SESSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2026**

The Town of Benton met in a regular legal session on the 10th day of March 2026 at 6:45 PM in the Benton Council Chambers, Benton Town Hall, 105 Sibley Street, Benton, Louisiana. Mayor James Friday called the REGULAR SESSION meeting to order. Debbie Rios called the roll with all members as follows:

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

Others present were Stephanie Collier, Attorney Joel Murphy, Chief Collier, Officer Mora, Officer Weaver, members of the media, and members of the public.

A motion made by Alderman Perry, seconded by Alderman Lawrence, to amend the agenda to add #6, an Executive Session to discuss an employee matter. No public comments were made the following votes were recorded:

Ayes: Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, and Alderman Lawrence
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

A motion made by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Perry, to amend the agenda to remove item #2 under the New Business, Ordinance 623 of 2026. Manning asked the mayor if he said approve or remove? Mayor: Remove. Mayor Friday explained that at the time of the agenda being sent out we only had one Attorney interested in being town attorney and the only time he was able to do it is if we moved the meeting to the third Monday. But since then, we have had two more Attorneys interested and one is here tonight, Attorney Joel Murphy. Mayor called for public comments: There being none of the following votes was recorded:

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Manning asked why was this being removed? The mayor stated that at the time of the agenda was sent out we only had one Attorney interested in being town attorney and the only time he was able to do it is if we moved the meeting to the third Monday. But since then, we have had two more Attorneys interested and one is here tonight, Attorney Joel Murphy. Mayor called for any other comments: None were made and the following votes were recorded:

Ayes: Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, and Alderman Lawrence
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

A motion made by Alderman Perry, seconded by Alderman Lawrence, to approve the agenda as amended. No public comments were made the following votes were recorded:

Ayes: Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, and Alderman Lawrence
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

A motion made by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Perry, to approve the February 3 workshop minutes. The mayor called for public comments.

Manning stated that she has a correction to the minutes. She stated that on #3, the ordinance to amend the accounting code for the PMI contract to decrease from 29 to 15,000.00. She stated that the clerk stated that the contract amount was 29,000.00, not 28,800.00. Manning also stated that PMI was hired for PR, not accounting.

However, after reviewing the recording from the February workshop, Manning's claim for a correction was found to be inaccurate. Mrs. Collier was twice on the recording that the PMI contract amount was 28,800.00. There will be no correction needed.

The mayor called for any other comments. None were made

Ayes: Alderman Manning (per the correction), Alderman Perry, and Alderman Lawrence
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

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A motion made by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Perry, to approve the February 9 Public Hearing and Regular Session minutes. The mayor called for public comments. No public comments were made the following votes were recorded:

Ayes: Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, and Alderman Lawrence
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

OLD BUSINESS:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 461 OF 2008 SETTING THE SALARY OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN OF THE TOWN OF BENTON, LOUISIANA, FIXING THE MONTHLY SALARY AT \$725.00, AND REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH.

A motion made by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Manning, to adopt Ordinance 461 of 2008 setting the salary of the Board of Aldermen. Manning stated that the AG's recommendation is correct. Just anyone needs confirmation that we are doing right by the law. The mayor called for public comments. No public comments were made the following votes were recorded:

Ayes: Alderman Manning and Alderman Perry
Nays: Alderman Lawrence
Abstain: None
Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

NEW BUSINESS:

Mayor Friday introduced Attorney Joel Murphy for appointment as Town Attorney.

Motion by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Perry, to appoint Attorney Murphy. Mayor Friday called for comments:

Manning asked why he wanted to serve in Benton. Attorney Murphy stated that he was asked, and he has 32+ years of experience. He stated that he has not been a town attorney before, but he has worked with nonprofits for 25 years, and they operate very similarly. Manning asked about his knowledge of Open Meeting Law, and he stated that it is a matter of reading the statutes and reference case law. As far as Public Records, I am well-versed due to my having to request records for criminal cases. Manning asked how accessible you will be to the board and for advice. Attorney Murphy stated that he understands this is a one-day-per-month commitment and will devote a set amount of time each

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week to respond to questions from the mayor or board. Mayor Friday stated that he stumbled into Attorney Murphy's office, introduced himself, and talked with him for a while. Manning, I know you have accepted the same salary as the former attorney. How much time will that give the town and council members for questions?

Attorney Murphy stated that he would not run my practice into the ground. I will set aside around 6 hours a month. Mayor Friday called for public comments

Ayes: Alderman Perry and Alderman Lawrence

Nays: Alderman Manning

Abstain: None

Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

Removed from agenda.

~~**ORDINANCE 623 of 2026:** Introduce and set for public hearing on April 13~~

~~**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE TOWN OF BENTON CODE OF ORDINANCE
ARTICLE I, IN GENERAL, SECTION 2-6: REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS**~~

~~**WHEREAS** the Board of Aldermen of the Town of Benton desires to amend Article I, Section 2-6 of the Town of Benton Municipal Code pertaining to regular monthly meetings; and~~

~~**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Board of Aldermen of the Town of Benton, Bossier Parish, Louisiana, that Article I, Section 2-6 of the Municipal Code of the Town of Benton be amended to read as follows:~~

~~**1. Location of Meetings**~~

~~Regular monthly meetings shall be held in the Benton Town Hall Council Chambers, located at 105 Sibley Street, Benton, Louisiana 71006.~~

~~**2. Date and Time of Regular Monthly Meetings**~~

~~The regular monthly meeting shall be held at 6:30 PM on the **third Monday of each month**. When a regular monthly meeting falls on a legal holiday, the meeting shall be held at the same location and hour on the next succeeding workday that is not a holiday.~~

~~**BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED** that all ordinances or parts of ordinances that are inconsistent with or in opposition to the provisions of this ordinance are hereby repealed in their entirety. This ordinance shall take effect after final passage and publication as required by law.~~

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BENTON FIRE DISTRICT 4 BOARD APPOINTMENTS:

A motion by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Perry, to reappoint Gerald Huddlston and Stephanie Collier to the Board of Commissioners for the Benton Fire District. Manning asked about the town meeting that Mrs. Collier missed due to a Board Meeting. Mrs. Collier stated that it was an Annual Banquet, and Mayor Friday stated she didn't even get to attend that because her mother was put in the hospital. The Mayor called for any other comments. There being none the following votes were recorded:

Ayes: Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, and Alderman Lawrence

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

ORDINANCE 626 of 2026:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 542 OF 2016 SETTING THE SALARY OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE OF THE TOWN OF BENTON, LOUISIANA, FIXING THE ANNUAL SALARY AT \$62,400.00, AND REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH.

WHEREAS, the Town of Benton, Louisiana operates as a Lawrason Act municipality governed by the provisions of Louisiana Revised Statutes Title 33; and

WHEREAS La. R.S. 33:404.1 grants the Board of Aldermen the authority to fix the compensation of municipal officers by ordinance; and

WHEREAS the current annual compensation for the Chief of Police is \$58,240.00; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Aldermen has determined that an adjustment in compensation is necessary to adequately reflect the time, duties, and responsibilities required of the office; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Town of Benton, Louisiana, in legal session convened, that:

SECTION 1. The annual compensation for the chief of police is hereby fixed at the sum of Sixty-two thousand, four hundred dollars and no/100 (\$62,400.00) per year.

SECTION 2. This salary increase shall be effective upon adoption of this Ordinance and upon the Town's appropriation of sufficient funds in the Town's annual budget.

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Motion by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Perry to introduce and set for public hearing on April 13, 2026.

Manning asked the mayor who approved of this ordinance. Mayor Friday stated that yes, he did. Manning asked who drafted the ordinance. Mrs. Collier stated that based on Alderman Carr's recommendation

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

Ayes: Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, and Alderman Lawrence

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

Motion by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Manning, to approve the month-to-date financials: Mayor called for any public comments:

Manning wants to make a comment that any official who wants supplemental documents that goes with the expenditure should be provided as requested. She pointed out that Attorney Nerren stated he would waive his fees for February. She stated that Mr. Nerren said his last day would be February 13. Mayor Friday read the letter sent by Attorney Nerren and the mayor stated that he asked him to stay on with the town through the end of the month and Mr. Nerren agreed.

Manning asked about line 48 about the maintenance fuel and that the Delta Fuel bill was paid in that department. Mrs. Collier stated that it was coded there by mistake and it will be journalized out of that because it belongs to the Water Sewer. Manning asked about the Police Truck that was purchased in 2025 and how it was duplicated on the Balance Reports and now in 2026 it is showing the balance has been corrected. Mrs. Collier explained that at the time, we did not know how to correct it on the balance report and that it took time to have it journalized off, and at the end of our audit, there will be journal entries making corrections to move things that belong in 2025. Manning discussed that during the ice storm, the purchase of police lunch was made when they could not go home, and their lunch was purchased with the mayor's visa. Manning asked about plants and flowers that were purchased. Mrs. Perry stated that she received flowers from the Town of Benton. The mayor stated it was for when she had her baby. Manning insists that we determine whether this is ethical. Manning asked about the two chairs purchased is not on the the expense report. The mayor stated that the Bossier Press Tribune publication for minutes stated that the alderman asked for a verbatim cost of the town 1400.00. Manning asked about a trash pump and a hose labeled as Capital Outlay. Manning asked if we have a capitalization policy. Manning asked what capital outlay equipment is. Back to the chair that was 470\$ that is considered capital outlay. She also asked what is CASCO? A purchase was made CBA for Rock Reed. Joey Plunkett explained that it is a Self-Contained Breathing apparatus. He confirmed that yes, it is something that the fire department uses and the state requires the town to have it next to our chlorine gas units.

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Mayor called for other comments: None were made and the following votes were recorded:

Ayes: Alderman Perry and Alderman Lawrence
Nays: Alderman Manning
Abstain: None
Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

Joey Plunkett asked if he could ask the new Attorney something. Mr. Plunkett asked the Attorney how he said he had been asked to be appointed as Town Attorney. Attorney Murphy stated that the mayor walked into his office one day, they talked for about half an hour, and he agreed to attend the meeting. Mr. Plunkett asked whether he knew the mayor or the clerk before the day the mayor went into his office. Attorney Murphy stated that no, he did not. Mr. Plunkett stated that he wanted that information on record so that no one could go on Facebook and say otherwise.

Rex Moncrief stated that if going into executive session, the reason has to be stated. Mayor Friday stated that it is to discuss an employee issue.

A motion made by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Perry, to adjourn the Regular Session meeting. The mayor called for public comments, but none were made. The following vote were recorded:

Ayes: Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, and Alderman Lawrence
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

A motion made by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Perry, to enter into Executive Session

Ayes: Alderman Manning, Alderman Perry, and Alderman Lawrence
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Alderman Carr and Alderman Brunson

Executive Session was adjourned.

No decisions were required from the executive session.

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