

JAMES FRIDAY
MAYOR



STEPHANIE SULLIVANT-COLLIER
CAO/ TOWN CLERK

TOWN OF BENTON LOUISIANA

PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES TOWN OF BENTON MONDAY, MAY 12, 2025, 6:30 PM

The Town of Benton Council met in a regular session on the 12th day of May 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the Benton Council Chambers, Benton Town Hall, 105 Sibley Street, Benton, Louisiana. Mayor James Friday called the Public Hearing to order. 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	PRESENT
Alderman Terry Lawrence	PRESENT

Alderman Perry gave the invocation, and Alderman Manning led the pledge. Others present were Attorney Erwin, Stephanie Collier, Debbie Rios, Chief Collier and members of the public.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS:

Ordinance 603 of 2025: Setting the clerk's pay

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 576 of 2022 OF THE MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN OF THE TOWN OF BENTON, BOSSIER PARISH, ESTABLISHING THE SALARY OF THE TOWN CLERK FOR THE YEAR 2025

WHEREAS, under RS Code 33:404.1, the Board of Aldermen shall set forth the salaries, wages, or compensation of the officers of the Town of Benton, who, by law, are entitled to salaries, wages, or compensation.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen of the Town of Benton, does hereby amend Ordinance 575 of 2022 by increasing the town clerk's hourly pay by 12%; and BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, that this ordinance will be in effect after a Public Hearing on May 12, 2025.

Mayor Friday called for public comments:

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

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Alderman Manning asked if Mrs. Collier had taken on any new duties since January of this year. Mrs. Collier replied, "No." Alderman Manning asked Mrs. Collier how long she had worked as the clerk for Benton and how much is her current pay. Mrs. Collier stated that she had been the town clerk for 18 years and made \$25 per hour and added she has had only one pay increase in six years while all other employees have been increased every year. Alderman Manning replied, \$52,000. Manning said she has "several concerns" about Mrs. Collier request for 12%. Alderman Manning asked if Mrs. Collier had provided a list of responsibilities to the council.

Mrs. Collier provided a list to the council.

Chief Administrative Officer Duties for the Town of Benton

- *Supervise Administrative Staff (Water Clerks, Billing Clerks, Bookkeeper, Meter Reader)*
- *Review and approve bank statements.*
- *Stay current on annual legislative actions affecting municipal affairs and federal and state labor laws.*
- *Research and write all municipal administrative policies.*
- *Annual Legislative Audit prep work.*
- *Prepare Council agendas and related documents. Summarize and publish council meetings and documents.*
- *Research and write Ordinances and Resolutions for the Municipal Code of Ordinances.*
- *Work with the mayor, engineers, State entities, MPC staff, Parish staff, and contractors on all municipal projects and grants.*
- *Write and manage state and federal grants for funding major projects and purchases of vehicles and equipment. (funds awarded to the town in past 18 years total over 10 million dollars)*
- *Write Proclamations for several types of establishments and occasions.*
- *Personally built and currently manage the town website. Oversee social media pages.*
www.townofbentonlouisiana.com

Supervise Water Department:

- ◆ *Handle customer complaints if water clerks can't resolve*
- ◆ *Approve all account adjustments and monthly disconnects*
- ◆ *Check the water clerks' daily work*

Annual Insurance renewals and claims of the following policies:

- ◆ *Travelers Insurance – General Liability Insurance & Vehicle Liability Policy*
 - ◆ *Stonetrust Insurance - Worker Comp policy*
 - ◆ *Blue Cross Blue Shield – Employee Health Benefits*
 - ◆ *Prejean Insurance – Auto Collision Policy*
 - ◆ *Kansas City Life Insurance – Employee Dental, Vision, and Life Insurance Policy*
 - ◆ *Colonial Insurance and Aflac – Employee personal policies*
- *Tasks related to insurance renewals: Provide updated asset lists and related information, such as values of new purchases and costs associated with improvements made to municipal assets such as water and sewer infrastructure. Maintain asset software.*

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- *File and manage all insurance claims. I.e: Worker Comp, auto accidents, liability claims, property damage / storm related damage to municipal facilities and equipment.*
- *Prepare and oversee the annual workers' comp audit in July. Every year file disputes when auditors misclassify workers.*

Human Resource Manager:

- ◆ *Co-interview with the Mayor of all applicants for municipal positions.*
- ◆ *Discuss municipal employee disciplinary actions and terminations with the mayor to ensure we comply with Federal and State Labor Laws.*
- ◆ *Stay up to date on all Federal and State employment laws.*
- ◆ *Municipal and Police new hire onboarding*
- ◆ *Manage employee benefits: Health Insurance, Life, Retirement, and Supplemental Pay.*
- ◆ *Manage payroll software (CSDC) updates and enter all employee information into CSDC and the time clock system.*
- ◆ *Employee status changes, pay increases, State of Louisiana notices of terminations, Workforce Development new hire notices, and respond to State Child Support Enforcement court orders for employee deductions.*
- ◆ *Perform weekly payroll, pay weekly payroll taxes, and bank transfers.*
- ◆ *Quarterly Federal Payroll tax reports and end-of-the-year Federal and State Tax Reports. Employee W2 report reconciliations.*

Annual Budgets

- *Prepare five budgets annually. General Fund amendment, 1978 Fund amendment, Upcoming year budgets for General Fund, 1978 Fund, and Water Sewer Enterprise Fund, present to council for approval. Publish in accordance with the Louisiana Local Government Budget Act.*

Alderman Manning said she had performed a “Rate Study” of municipal clerks' pay in Louisiana. She said she looked up two other municipalities of similar size, and these are the results of that “study.” Alderman Manning stated that the “study” on municipal clerks' pay is based on 2020 payrolls from two towns of comparable populations.

- The first was from New Llano, population 2,085, where the clerk had been there 18 years and was paid \$39,159.00.
- The second was from Kenner, population 2,161, the clerk has been there 20 years, and she makes \$51,780.00 (a 220.00 difference from Benton's clerk)

Mrs. Collier asked Alderman Manning if she had called to request a list of the clerks' duties for the two towns, because a rate study cannot be based on population alone. Alderman Manning stated, "No, I did not." Mrs. Collier: Am I supposed to stand by while all other employees get pay increases and not ask for one myself just because other municipalities choose to pay their clerks poorly? I am sure that would be considered “discrimination”.

Alderman Carr asked if we could vote.

Alderman Perry asked, “If Mrs. Collier were to leave would the incoming person be paid what Mrs. Collier is currently paid?” Mayor Friday said, “No because they would be paid according to their skill level.”

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Mayor Friday called for any other comments: None were made

Motion made by Alderman Manning, seconded by Alderman Carr to adjourn the Public Hearing. Mayor Friday called for any comments, there being none, the following votes were recorded:

YEAS: Alderman Carr, Alderman Manning, Alderman Brunson, Alderman Perry, and Alderman Lawrence

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

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**REGULAR SESSION MEETING
MINUTES
TOWN OF BENTON
MONDAY, MAY 12, 2025, 6:30 PM**

The Town of Benton Council met in a regular session on the 12th day of May 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the Benton Council Chambers, Benton Town Hall, 105 Sibley Street, Benton, Louisiana. Mayor James Friday called the Regular Session to order, with all members as follows:

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

Motion by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Perry, to approve the Regular Session agenda. Mayor Friday called for public comments; there being none, the following vote was recorded:

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

Motion by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Perry to approve the April 14th Minutes. Mayor Friday called for public comments; there being none, the following vote was recorded:

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

OLD BUSINESS:

Final Vote: Ordinance 603 Of 2025:

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Motion by Alderman Carr, seconded by Alderman Lawrence to adopt Ordinance 603. Mayor Friday called for comments, there being none, the following votes were recorded:

AYES: Alderman Brunson, Alderman Perry, Alderman Lawrence

NAYS: Alderman Carr, Alderman Manning

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Motion by Alderman Carr, seconded by Alderman Brunson to issue a cease-and-desist order to Auto Program & Performance. Mayor Friday called for comments, there being none, the following votes were recorded:

AYES: Alderman Carr, Alderman Manning, Alderman Brunson, Alderman Perry, Alderman Lawrence

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

Motion by Alderman Carr, seconded by Alderman Lawrence to set for public hearing for the adoption of the 2025 Millage rate. Mayor Friday called for comments, there being none, the following votes were recorded:

AYES: Alderman Carr, Alderman Manning, Alderman Brunson, Alderman Perry, Alderman Lawrence

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

Motion by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Carr to approve the April Financials. Mayor Friday called for comments and Alderman Manning stated she “definitely had questions about some expenditures”. She began with questioning \$5,000 on a VISA. The mayor’s reply was that it was to send two employees to get their “Operators License-highly sought after in the state of Louisiana vs. paying someone to come here frequently to check the water. He explained their classes were in south Louisiana and it paid for their hotel rooms as well as the actual certificates. He advised he was very transparent and welcomed her to come to the office the next day to look at the receipts. She also questioned Line 121-” Return Credit and Close Account” to which the mayor explained a problem at the bank with that particular card continuously being charged and refunded and noted it was the

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previous mayor Shelly Horton's card therefore the Town closed it. Next, she questioned Line 159 asking what "local government was or was that Ms. Caroline our lobbyist" and he answered it was. She also asked, "What was the \$50,000 piece of equipment for the sewer department and the mayor explained in depth what it was used for. Lastly, she questioned Line 187 "Reapply VISA Friday at 1st Guaranty Bank for \$659" and Mayor replied he opened a Town credit card in his name and she could view the receipts anytime she would like.

Mayor Friday called for any other comments, there being none, the following votes were recorded:

AYES: Alderman Carr, Alderman Manning, Alderman Brunson, Alderman Perry, Alderman Lawrence

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

The mayor called for comments and Chinetta A. Neal of 730 Carver Street approached the podium to request public records. Mayor Friday responded that comments can only be made on the agenda items and if there is to be discussion on a different topic she would need to submit a request prior to the meeting. Chinetta stated that she had requested the audio file from the last meeting and had not received a copy. Stephanie Collier stated that yes, she did submit a request and within the 3 day period I responded to her that the video will be available for viewing in the Council Chambers at 9 am the following day. After going to remind her twice telling her the video is set up and ready, Chinetta refused to view the video. According to the Louisiana Public Records law once she refused that closed the record request. Chinetta stated that she asked for a copy. Stephanie Collier explained that the law states that if the record being requested is an active working document it cannot be released that I am bound by law to allow it to be viewed. I explained that to Chinetta, she could not have a copy until the minutes were finished and published. Alderman Carr asked Mrs. Collier if now that the minutes are published could she provide Chinetta a copy? Mrs. Collier stated that she will have to submit a second records request.

SECOND: Carlotta Askew-Brown of 620 Benton Road and with the MPC approached to speak about certification recommendations.

THIRD: Alderman Manning made comments about the ditches not being mowed in her district. Also, that the town employees were being reckless with the mowers and that she observed them while sitting in her car videoing them mowing. Mayor Friday stated, "Yes, I know that. You received several complaints from employees about the way you spoke to them that same day." Alderman Manning stated, "I don't care about the complaints and I will keep doing what I was elected to do."

Motion by Alderman Carr and Seconded by Alderman Brunson to adjourn. Mayor Friday called for any comments to be made by council members, there being none, meeting adjourned.

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