

JAMES FRIDAY
MAYOR



STEPHANIE COLLIER
CAO

TOWN OF BENTON LOUISIANA

WORK SESSION MINUTES February 3, 2026

The Town of Benton Council met in a legal work session on the 3th day of February 2026 at 6:00 p.m., in the Benton Council Chambers, Benton Town Hall, Benton, Louisiana. Mayor James Friday called the work session to order. Stephanie Collier called the roll, with all members as follows:

Alderman Carr	ABSENT
Alderman Manning	PRESENT
Alderman Brunson	PRESENT (Came in during discussion of item #2)
Alderman Perry	ABSENT
Alderman Lawrence	PRESENT

Others Present Attorney Nerren, Stephanie Collier, and Debbie Rios.

1. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 613 OF 2025 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 state 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 FY 2026 budget is hereby amended as follows:

Adjustments to Expenditures

1. Decrease General Admin Dept 100-5111 (Community Beautification Expense) at \$150,000.00 for a revised total of \$7,500.

BE IT FUTHER ORDAINED the Board of Aldermen 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

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Comments:

Mayor Friday discussed that he has quotes for the gateway signs, the Simpson Street park playground project, and landscaping at the municipal buildings. He also discussed the community garden project. Manning asked for confirmation that the consultant has already been paid for her services and that there will be no other payments for consultation. Mrs. Collier confirmed that she is paid in full. Manning stated that, in light of the new information about the projects, she agreed to remove this ordinance by amending the general fund budget to decrease 100-5111, the community garden and beautification budget.

2. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE PROPOSED FY 2026 TOWN BUDGET

WHEREAS, the Town of Benton, Louisiana has prepared and submitted a proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2026 in accordance with applicable state statutes and local charter requirements; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has reviewed the proposed budget, held duly noticed public hearings, and received public comment; 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’s proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget by adjusting expenditures as outlined herein.

Amendments to Proposed Budget

The proposed FY 2026 budget is hereby amended as follows:

Adjustments to Expenditures

1. Decrease General Admin Dept 100-5130 (Supplies-General) at \$6,500.00 for a revised total of \$4,500.00.
2. Decrease General Admin Dept 100-5140 (Supplies-Office) at \$6,000.00 for a revised total of \$3,500.00.

BE IT FUTHER ORDAINED the Board of Aldermen 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

Alderman Brunson came in at is now counted as present.

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Comments:

Attorney Nerren asked Mrs. Collier whether she had any statement regarding this budget amendment and what was spent last year. Mrs. Collier stated that 6,563.74 was spent in 2025 for general supplies and 4,819.82 for office supplies. Manning stated that she wanted to keep this one.

3. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE PROPOSED FY 2026 TOWN BUDGET

WHEREAS, the Town of Benton, Louisiana has prepared and submitted a proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2026 in accordance with applicable state statutes and local charter requirements; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has reviewed the proposed budget, held duly noticed public hearings, and received public comment; 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's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget by adjusting expenditures as outlined herein.

Amendments to Proposed Budget

The proposed FY 2026 budget is hereby amended as follows:

Adjustments to Expenditures

1. Decrease General Admin Dept 100-5975 (HR/ACCOUNTING SERVICE) at \$29,000.00 for a revised total of \$15,000.00.

BE IT FUTHER ORDAINED the Board of Aldermen 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

Comments:

Manning explained that she requested this amendment because she reviewed their contract and found that a different amount was being paid. Mrs. Collier stated that their contract is 28,800.00 per year, and the difference may be for the cleanup of accounts for unreconciled checks compiled from year to year. The base contract is 2400.00 per month. If you reduce this it the town will not hold its end of the contract.

Alderman Lawrence reiterated that PMI is trying to clean up the books, so they will have good numbers to start. Manning stated she wanted to remove this ordinance.

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4. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE PROPOSED FY 2026 TOWN BUDGET

WHEREAS, the Town of Benton, Louisiana has prepared and submitted a proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2026 in accordance with applicable state statutes and local charter requirements; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has reviewed the proposed budget, held duly noticed public hearings, and received public comment; 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's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget by adjusting expenditures as outlined herein.

Amendments to Proposed Budget

The proposed FY 2026 budget is hereby amended as follows:

Adjustments to Expenditures

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

BE IT FUTHER ORDAINED the Board of Aldermen 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

Comments:

Mrs. Collier stated that the majority of the 500.00 had already been spent. The office needed 2 chairs and a small cabinet. Alderman Lawrence explained to Manning that he looked at the budget and, when he reviewed all the line items, he found that, when it was amended at the end of the year, roughly 40% of all items went over, and 40% went over, while the 20% were right on par. He stated that just because it's in the budget doesn't mean it will be spent. Attorney Nerren asked for any other comments about capital outlay furniture. He asked Manning if she still wanted to keep this one. Manning stated she did want to keep this one.

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5. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE PROPOSED FY 2026 TOWN BUDGET

WHEREAS, the Town of Benton, Louisiana has prepared and submitted a proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2026 in accordance with applicable state statutes and local charter requirements; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has reviewed the proposed budget, held duly noticed public hearings, and received public comment; 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's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget by adjusting expenditures as outlined herein.

Amendments to Proposed Budget

The proposed FY 2026 budget is hereby amended as follows:

Adjustments to Expenditures

Decrease in Maintenance Dept 400-5750 (Telephone/Cell) at \$2,000.00 for a revised total of \$850.00.

BE IT FUTHER ORDAINED the Board of Aldermen 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

Comments:

Manning stated her reason for that was that when looking at the line item for other cell phone were budgeted lower and this was budgeted for 2000.00. Mrs. Collier stated that for one cellphone it costs \$1032.00. Manning asked Alderman Lawrence what he thought. Alderman Lawrence stated that he thinks it is fine the way it is. Manning stated that she will remove this one.

6. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE PROPOSED FY 2026 TOWN BUDGET

WHEREAS, the Town of Benton, Louisiana has prepared and submitted a proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2026 in accordance with applicable state statutes and local charter requirements; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has reviewed the proposed budget, held duly noticed public hearings, and received public comment; 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;

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The purpose of this ordinance is to amend the Town's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget by adjusting expenditures as outlined herein.

Amendments to Proposed Budget

The proposed FY 2026 budget is hereby amended as follows:

Adjustments to Expenditures

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

BE IT FUTHER ORDAINED the Board of Aldermen 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

Comments:

Manning stated that if we had four council members wouldn't we need to amend this to add money. Manning stated that she wants to keep this one.

7. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE PROPOSED FY 2026 TOWN BUDGET

WHEREAS, the Town of Benton, Louisiana has prepared and submitted a proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2026 in accordance with applicable state statutes and local charter requirements; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has reviewed the proposed budget, held duly noticed public hearings, and received public comment; 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's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget by adjusting expenditures as outlined herein.

Amendments to Proposed Budget

The proposed FY 2026 budget is hereby amended as follows:

Adjustments to Expenditures

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

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Comments:

Mrs. Collier stated that there is only one vehicle in this department and that the mechanic normally does not have an assigned vehicle. However, this is only one truck for one worker who lives 2 miles from the maintenance barn. The five-year average is 1500.00 per year. The only time he goes anywhere is to pick up parts occasionally. Manning asked where Mrs. Collier you put it all together under water department. Mrs. Collier stated that this is for one vehicle for one employee in this department and no other trucks or employees. Manning wanted to keep this one.

8. 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 IV. BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that all Ordinances or parts thereof in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

Comments:

Attorney Nerren stated that Alderman Carr has an ordinance she wants to submit a separate one with a larger increase. He said this one can still move forward, and Alderman Carr can submit her at the next meeting. Manning references a study she performed on the Alderman pay increases. She also stated that it is the board's prerogative to give itself a pay increase.

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Mayor gave out the study on council increases. Alderman Carr based her request for an increase on the cost of living from 2009 to the present and on the council's lack of an increase since 2009. Manning referenced a study she presented on the clerks' pay increase. Mrs. Collier disputed Manning's study, calling it inaccurate. Attorney Nerren stated we are getting off track. Alderman Carr will submit her ordinance on Monday, and it will be introduced. This will still move forward, and it can be voted on and even amended by the council prior to adoption.

9. Discussion of moving the regular meeting that is held on the second Monday of the month and we need to move the regular meetings to the third Monday of the month to accommodate the MPC when they have additions to the agenda.

Manning stated that we already approved the ordinance in the last meeting. Mrs. Collier stated yes, that was the ordinance about council packet delivery. Alderman Lawrence explained that it concerned the delivery of council packets. Manning asked again why we need to have the meeting moved if we already adopted the council packets ordinance. Attorney Nerren stated that if anyone wants it to run, one of the board members needs to present it.

Mayor Friday gave a brief project update on the current projects about the new restaurant coming to town. It will be a tex mex similar to Chipolti. He also gave a brief update on the sewer projects. He updated on a few major places in some of the streets have been repaired. Sharron, Robert St., and Crestwood Circle. Sewer Plant contracts have been signed and are ready to start. We have developers wanting to build 29 homes on Fifth Street.

Meeting is adjourned.

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