

**Special Called Meeting
Benton City Council
June 3, 2021**

The special called meeting of the Benton City Council was called to order on Thursday, June 3, 2021 at 8:30 A.M. at Benton City Hall. This is a joint meeting with Benton Partnership.

Present were:

Bethany Cooper – City of Benton/Benton Partnership
Brooke Chappell – City of Benton/Benton Partnership
Butch Holland – City Council
Keith Travis – Benton Partnership
Rob Mattingly – City Attorney
Lindsey Ryan – Color of Light
Megan Parks – Kentucky Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Mitchell Ponder – Kentucky Lake Chamber of Commerce/Benton Partnership
Elena Blevins – Kentucky Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau/Benton Partnership
Leslie Taylor – Benton Electric System/Benton Partnership
Josh Tubbs – Marshall County Economic Development
Dana Howard – CFSB
Areia Hathcock – Marshall County Tribune Courier
Ann Riley – City Council/Benton Partnership
Lenisa Jones – Marshall Co. Public Library
Rita Dotson – City of Benton Mayor/Benton Partnership
George Milam – Marshall County Arts Commission
Harry Green – City of Benton/Benton Partnership
Jennifer Lovett – City of Benton
Jayna Burkey – Marshall County Resiliency Center/Benton Partnership
Tina Fox – Benton Partnership
Art & Kim Erbacker – Kae’s Buds & Blooms

Elena Blevins called the meeting to order on behalf of Benton Partnership. She welcomed everyone and gave a brief description on who Benton Partnership is and what we do. She also gave an update on our events for this year.

Mayor Dotson welcomed everyone and explained the purpose of this joint meeting is to get ideas on how to make Benton a more business friendly location.

Josh Tubbs spoke about the main challenge for Benton and Marshall County is our population decline. He mentioned that Calvert City has hired Retail Strategies for assistance to help build their city. This company looks at population, demographics, traffic counts, etc in order to give recommendations. Josh also mentioned a big struggle for our entire state is that Tennessee doesn’t have an income tax. Kentucky loses businesses and population because of this.

Elena Blevins discussed how Paducah has started a marketing campaign to entice people to not only work in Paducah but move there as well. Elena also mentioned the branding study that was done throughout Marshall County a few years ago. City of Benton was branded as “Benton – Kentucky Lake’s Downtown.” Mayor Dotson would like to re-visit the branding report and review their recommendations.

Lindsey Ryan gave her insight from a small business perspective. She said that a new small business incentive would be enticing as she started her business with very little money hoping that it would succeed. Lindsey also mentioned the idea of having a mentorship program for those that would like to start a small business or currently have a small business and help those with the starting process. She also offered the idea of showcasing the empty buildings and giving the history of the building or previous businesses that were located there in order to help encourage buyers to fill those buildings.

Keith Travis suggested Chris Woolridge with Small Business Development Center at Murray State University to be a contact to help with small business planning. Keith reiterated upon Josh’s mention that our population is suffering. He suggested putting some of our focus on healthcare as healthcare is a booming source of revenue.

Elena Blevins also mentioned the chance of hiring a Marketing Director for Benton like Calvert City has. Mayor Dotson said it is something that can be discussed. Keith mentioned asking for assistance with the salary through PACRO.

Types of incentives were discussed briefly such as property tax abatement or payroll tax discounts. It was also mentioned to help with financial assistance on updating storefronts to make them more appealing.

There being no further business to discuss, meeting adjourned at 9:40 A.M.

Rita Dotson, Mayor

ATTEST:

Bethany Cooper, City Clerk/Treas.