



**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2025 AT 6PM
ABITA SPRINGS TOWN HALL
22161 LEVEL ST., ABITA SPRINGS, LA 70420**

Posted: February 3, 2025 4pm

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Curtis
INVOCATION: Alderman Contois
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Alderman Saussy

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1.) Push Mow Parade – February 23, 2025
- 2.) LLA-LMA Presentation, Tuesday, March 18, 2025 9am-to 1pm
- 3.) Law Enforcement Report

ROLL CALL:

Call for Agenda Modifications

CHAIRMAN UPDATES:

- INFRASTRUCTURE
- HEALTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES
- FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS
- COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1.) Discussion: Development of a permitting process for communication utilities to install infrastructure such as lines, above-ground markers, service boxes, and other related equipment. Additional considerations may include the development of regulations for the proper screening, repair, maintenance, and removal of damaged or obsolete above-ground installations.

OLD BUSINESS:

NONE

OPEN/ADJOURNMENT:

Municipalities have struggled with the issues of damaged rights-of-way and the presence of unsightly or poorly maintained public utility infrastructure—such as electrical boxes, transformers, streetlight poles, utility meters, valves, and other essential equipment—within public spaces. These elements can negatively impact both the visual appeal and safety of neighborhoods. This item was placed on the agenda to discuss some solutions that others have implemented or have considered when creating regulations to manage permitting, *approval*, maintenance, screening, appearance, and quantity of these appurtenances.

1. Permitting Process:

- **Pre-approval for New Installations:** Require a permitting process for all new utility installations, where a review of both the necessity and aesthetic impact is conducted. The application should include detailed plans for placement, size, and design.
- **Location Review:** Ensure that utility appurtenances are placed in locations that minimize visual impact, such as away from main roads or residential areas, or in less visually prominent areas (e.g., alleys, side streets).
- **Setbacks and Spacing Requirements:** Establish setbacks from private property lines, existing infrastructure, and landscaping to avoid congestion in the right-of-way.

2. Approval Process:

- **Review by Historic or Planning:** Include planning, landscape consultants in the approval process to evaluate the appurtenances' design and integration into the surrounding environment.
- **Architectural and Landscaping Standards:** Develop architectural and design guidelines to ensure new utility appurtenances are visually compatible.

3. Maintenance Requirements:

- **Regular Inspections:** Establish a program for regular inspections of utility appurtenances by the responsible utility provider, with clear standards for cleanliness, upkeep, and functionality.
- **Responsibility for Maintenance:** Outline in the ordinance that utility providers are responsible for the repair, painting, and upkeep of their installations, including cleaning and replacing damaged components.
- **Timeframe for Repairs:** Define a timeframe for when maintenance or repairs must be conducted after receiving a complaint, with penalties for delays or neglect.

4. Screening and Appearance:

- **Landscaping and Greenery:** Encourage or require the use of landscaping, such as shrubs, trees, or ground cover, to screen utility appurtenances from public view. This can include guidelines on the height and type of plantings to ensure they do not obstruct visibility or cause safety hazards.

- **Decorative Barriers:** Implement provisions for decorative fencing, walls, or other visual barriers (such as murals) around larger appurtenances. These should blend with the surrounding environment while still allowing access for maintenance.
- **Camouflaging Designs:** Permit or require utilities to be placed in aesthetically designed structures or enclosures that blend with the surrounding environment. For example, small utility boxes can be hidden inside decorative posts or vaults designed to look like outdoor furniture or art installations.
- **Utility Box Art:** Allow for or encourage public art, such as murals, to be applied to utility boxes or other small appurtenances. This creates a more visually appealing streetscape and can also foster community involvement.

5. Quantity Controls:

- **Limitation on Appurtenance Density:** Set limits on the number of utility appurtenances in a specific area, such as requiring consolidation or co-location of utility infrastructure to reduce the clutter of installations.
- **Co-location Requirements:** Require utilities to co-locate appurtenances wherever possible to reduce the footprint of infrastructure in the right-of-way. For example, multiple utility providers should share utility poles or cabinets when feasible.
- **Size Restrictions:** Define limits on the size of utility appurtenances, especially for those located in high-traffic or residential areas. This can prevent excessively large installations from dominating the streetscape.
- **Undergrounding:** Encourage the undergrounding of utilities. When it is not possible to place underground or defeats the purpose such as in the case of markers, encourage the use of smaller, less intrusive above-ground components.

6. Enforcement and Penalties:

- **Fines and Penalties for Non-compliance:** Establish penalties for violations of appearance standards, such as failing to maintain, screen, or paint utility appurtenances. Fines could be scaled according to the severity of the violation.
- **Accreditation for Utility Providers:** Develop a certification or accreditation system for utility providers who demonstrate consistently high standards for installation and maintenance of appurtenances. This could incentivize providers to go above and beyond the basic requirements.
- **Regular Audits:** Periodically audit the appearance and maintenance of public utility appurtenances to ensure ongoing compliance.

7. Public Awareness and Communication:

- **Public Information on Utility Installations:** Develop a community outreach program to inform residents about the placement and purpose of utility appurtenances in their neighborhoods. This helps reduce resistance and increases awareness of how these infrastructures contribute to public services.
- **Collaboration with Public Artists:** Invite local artists or residents to participate in design and art projects related to utility appurtenances, helping foster community pride and a sense of ownership over the public space.

Example Ordinance Section Outline:

1. **General Provisions**
 - a. Definitions of public utility appurtenances
 - b. Applicability of ordinance to new and existing installations
2. **Permitting and Approval**
 - a. Application process
 - b. Review criteria for utility installations
 - c. Approval or denial process
3. **Design and Appearance Standards**
 - a. Guidelines for aesthetic integration with surroundings
 - b. Screening and landscaping requirements
 - c. Camouflaging and artistic treatment of appurtenances
4. **Maintenance and Repair**
 - a. Utility provider responsibility for upkeep
 - b. Inspection and repair timelines
 - c. Maintenance bonds
5. **Quantity and Density Limits**
 - a. Maximum number of appurtenances per area
 - b. Co-location and undergrounding incentives
6. **Enforcement and Penalties**
 - a. Compliance deadlines
 - b. Penalties for failure to maintain, repair, or properly place appurtenances
7. **Public Outreach and Education**
 - a. Informational campaigns
 - b. Public art opportunities

Conclusion:

By establishing comprehensive guidelines, the Town can ensure that utility appurtenances are placed, maintained, and visually integrated into the public space in a way that enhances the aesthetic appeal of neighborhoods and public spaces, while also ensuring necessary infrastructure is efficiently and safely managed.