

## Predictions for Bossier

Written by Sean Green  
Friday, 28 December 2012 12:45 -

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*Parish administrators share what's ahead for their municipalities in the new year*

That's a wrap on 2012. Now, let's look ahead into the crystal ball to figure out what lies ahead in 2013.

For the towns in Bossier Parish, and the parish as a whole, there remains a lot of infrastructure improvements — roads, sewer, water, and even an election.

Below, the guys in the “big chairs” share what they see as the major issues, challenges, and projects that will come their, and their constituents', way in this new year.

### **Bossier Parish**

In 2013, the major projects will be continuing to establish the parish-wide water and sewer district along the Highway 80 corridor. This will begin with the construction of a sewer plant on the Red River and establishing the infrastructure to get waste water to the plant.

The parish is also in talks to take over the sewer systems for Forrest Hills, Country Place, and Merry Woods.

“I don't know if we will get that completed by the end of the year or the first quarter of next year,” said Parish Administrator Bill Altimus.

Their other major project of the past year, the Arthur Ray Teague Parkway extension, will open in the first two months of 2013.

Crews finished up the final overlay of asphalt for both lanes last month.

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"It's a matter of dressing it up, smoothing it out, and putting up the noise walls, guard rails, and striping," said Altimus.

He said the Police Jury and south Bossier residents see it as a source of pride.

"It's something we really stayed with, but you have no choice, it's got to happen. We put a tremendous amount of resources and effort into it and working with the landowners and interested parties to make this happen."

In 2013, Altimus was optimistic that the Jury could begin the process of negotiating with natural resource companies and AEP about extending the parkway further towards Taylortown. A major sticking point are potential gas wells and power poles that cost \$700,000 to move per pole.

The other major focus of roads in 2013 will be the major North-South route, which is the project of extending Swan Lake Road. Altimus said they hope to begin purchasing right of way for that project in the first part of 2013.

He also pledged the Jury's cooperation is seeking out the bedding of the U.S. Air Force's tanker mission at Barksdale Air Force Base.

"The Air Force knows where they want to put it, but some bases are potential sites. Because that's the next big opportunity for the Air Force, if we can get a training, operating, or reserve wing here, that's a big plus," said Altimus.

Looking back, Altimus was pleased to see the parish continue its steady growth and buck the notion of an economic slow down.

"There are a lot of economic opportunities. Benteler Steel is going to be a huge benefit," said

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Altimus. "Just to build the facility is going to take 1,000 people. That's people that are working and living here and then you have the people that will be working there."

He also noted the \$22 million training facility at Bossier Parish Community College that will be a benefit for the business community and the college.

"(Chancellor Jim) Henderson and his crew have been forward leaning on anything that needs to be done. If there's a segment of the economy that needs training, by next semester they have a program," praised Altimus.

### **The City of Bossier City**

Last year was another quiet year for Bossier City with the city continuing to upgrade its water and sewer and roads. But 2013 will see the potential for some upheaval. The City Council and Mayor Lorenz "Lo" Walker will face an election in April 2013.

Walker said the continuity between his office and the council are a major reason why the city has been running so smoothly.

"We've been fortunate to have stability and continuity, which has allowed us to work smoothly," said Walker. "My administration and I work hand in hand with the City Council and for the most part, we've all been on the same page. So I think the city has been well served by the continuity of leadership."

Bossier City residents can look forward to continued infrastructure improvements and even a new addition to the city's skyline.

Major infrastructure projects being pushed forward include the Swan Lake Road expansion project's second phase from Shed Road to I-20, advancing Arthur Ray Teague Parkway further north towards the casinos, an overpass near the new wastewater treatment plant on the Red River, and the final phase in the expansion of Shed Road.

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"It's phase seven of a seven phase project, which will see three lanes from Airline Drive to Benton Road and improved drainage," said Walker. "That's always been low area with flooding issues, so that's a biggie."

The new wastewater treatment plant will continue moving upwards, concurrent to an upgrade of the northeast treatment plant.

He said the city will also join with Shreveport in luring passenger service for a railroad to run from Dallas, Texas to Shreveport-Bossier and start the process of locating a station site.

And residents can see a new hotel tower already going up in Margaritaville. The new casino resort is expected to open mid year looking forward to Margaritaville

"That will be a great resource to those who get revenue and an entertainment venue for residents," said Walker.

Nationally, Walker said several issues can trickle down to Bossier City, including national debt and, most worryingly for Barksdale Air Force Base, military sequestration.

"That can have a dramatic impact on the capabilities of our military in long term. If officials start cutting back, we will start losing our ability to focus on modern day warfare," warned Walker.

He acknowledges that his plans for this year can all end in April's voting booths, but is optimistic of seeing his goals achieved.

"If there's a large turnover, then those plans (I have cited) could be impacted," said Walker. "But with our consistency in elected officers and that we agree on what's important in the city is important and we can serve the city well."

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And early indications are that he will serve another term.

“I don't want to assume anything (but with qualification ending in February), all informal signs point to I should have a favorable path to continuancy,” said Walker.

## **The Town of Benton**

The number one project on the calendar is a significant rehabilitation of the town's water system.

This will include a major facelift and overhaul on the water plant on Palmetto Road, followed up with beginning the process of replacing iron pipes in water system.

“These are creating significant issue such as blowouts and the impact it's having is two fold: one, it's creating interruption of service to customers and two, it's a significant expense to the town,” said Mayor Wayne Cathcart. “It's just deteriorated to the point where we have to have a major replacement.”

Last year, the city contracted with an engineering group to perform an alternative water source study for Benton.

“We've hired professionals to evaluate potential sources and provide the city with viable alternatives to the future of our water,” said Cathcart. “You don't run out, grab an idea, and say, 'Do this.' When it comes to something significant as water for our town, you contact the professionals.”

He hopes to have a course of action on water for the town determined by 2013.

Cathcart said the town will focus on continually upgrading and rehabilitating its sewer mains, especially in the southwest portion of Benton.

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The town will also identify city streets and begin a rehabilitation plan. Cathcart pledged to ask the Town Council to completely renovate Sibley Street to include drainage upgrades and fix curbing issues.

“Part of it is literally sinking,” said Cathcart. “That’s going to be a major project.”

He also hopes to clean up dilapidated property throughout the town.

“I hope to help owners realize that it’s to everyone’s best interest to eliminate property that is a health and safety hazard,” said Cathcart.

He said the town can expect a judgement from the Army Corps of Engineers on permit to build Whittington Park on Pine Street on property with wetlands designation.

Looking back on 2012, some of the town's accomplishments of the past year include a new police station, new tornado siren system, a senior meal site in the town, and space for a potential civic center.

Not bad, for a mayor who spent his first year educating himself on the best course of action.

“Under the circumstances with a new, inexperienced mayor on a steep learning curve, I think we’ve made significant improvements and we’ve made a lot of progress,” said Cathcart. “I feel accomplished and I’m very pleased and glad the first year is over with.”