

# **CITY OF BRENHAM BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT MINUTES**

**May 12, 2025**

*The meeting minutes herein are a summarization of meeting proceedings, not a verbatim transcription.*

A regular meeting of the Board of Adjustment was held on May 12, 2025, at 5:15 pm in the Brenham Municipal Building, City Council Chambers, at 200 West Vulcan Street, Brenham, Texas.

Commissioners present:

Jon Hodde, Chairman  
Walt Edmunds  
Darren Huckert  
Arlen Thielemann  
Mary Lou Winkelmann

Commissioners absent:

Dax Flisowski (conflict of interest)

Staff present:

Stephanie Doland, Development Services Director  
Shauna Laauwe, City Planner

Citizens / Media present:

Sarah Forsythe, Brenham Banner  
Wesley Brinkmeyer, Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative (BBEC)  
Richie Cepeda, Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA)

**1. Call Meeting to Order**

Chairman Hodde called the meeting to order at 5:19 p.m. with a quorum of five (5) Commissioners present.

**2. Public Comments and Receipt of Petitions**

There were no comments and/or receipt of petitions.

**3. Reports and Announcements**

Stephanie Doland informed the Board that a training session with the Planning and Zoning Commission has been set for June 16<sup>th</sup> from 12-1:30 pm. Additional information will be provided soon. Ms. Doland also informed the Board that the City Secretary's office is starting the process of Board renewals early this year so Kim Hodde will be emailing the re-appointment forms out to the three persons whose terms are expiring at the end of this year (Jon Hodde, Walt Edmunds, and Mary Lou Winkelmann) and asked them if interested in serving another term, to please fill out the form and return it to Kim as soon as possible.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**4. Statutory Consent Agenda**

The Statutory Agenda includes non-controversial and routine items that the Commission may act on with one single vote. A Commissioner may pull any item from the Consent Agenda in order that the Commission discusses and act upon it individually as part of the Regular Agenda.

**4-a. Minutes from April 14, 2025, Board of Adjustment Meeting.**

Chairman Hodde called for any corrections or additions to the minutes as presented. Darren Huckert noted that on page two, item 5 under the motion paragraph, it states “to appoint Jon Hodde and Chair....” This should be “as” instead of “and”. The correction was noted. A motion was made by Commissioner Thielemann and seconded by Commissioner Winkelmann to approve the Consent Agenda (item 4-a) as noted and corrected. The motion carried unanimously.

**REGULAR AGENDA**

**5. Public hearing, Discussion and Possible Action on Case Number VARIANCE-25-0003: A request by the Lower Colorado River Authority / Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, Inc. for a Variance from the City of Brenham Code of Ordinances, Appendix A – Zoning, Part II, Division 2, Section 4.04(3) to allow a tower height of 195-foot, where a maximum 150-foot height is allowed for construction of a tower at 2401 US Highway 290 W, described as Lot 2 (13.384-acres) of the BBEC Hwy 290 East Subdivision, in Brenham, Washington County, Texas.**

Shauna Laauwe, City Planner, presented the staff report for Case No. VARIANCE-25-0003. Ms. Laauwe stated that this is a request from the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) as the applicant and Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative (BBEC) as the property owner. The subject property is addressed as 2401 US Highway 290 and is identified as Lot 2 of the BBEC Hwy 290 Subdivision. It is generally located on the south side of US Highway 290 W, west of Miranda Lane and Westwood Lane. The subject property and the properties to the west (Brenham Veterinary Hospital) and to the north (across US Highway 290) are zoned B-2, Commercial Research and Technology. The property to the east is zoned R-3, Manufactured Home Residential; however, it is not developed with with manufactured homes but rather houses a vacant commercial building and abandoned fruit/plant stand. The subject 13.384-acre lot is currently mostly undeveloped vacant land that is used for vehicle and equipment storage by Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative. The BBEC site (Lot 1) at 2401 US Highway 290 E has an existing 190-foot communication tower that has been on the property for at least twenty years and is owned by BBEC but that has LCRA equipment on it. LCRA utilizes this tower to transmit emergency communications for the Brenham area for critical utility services. Due to the proposed TxDOT project that is slated to begin in 2028, TxDOT has already begun acquisition of the property and the existing tower will be removed. LCRA has been looking for a location in close proximity to the existing tower. The applicant, LCRA, is proposing to construct a new, 195-foot communication tower southwest of the existing location on Lot 2. The property is owned by BBEC but the tower will be owned by LCRA. The proposed tower would be 5-foot taller than the existing tower and 45-feet taller than the maximum 15-feet allowed in the B-2 Zoning District. In addition to the tower, the site will also have a 100'x100' pad site that will house a telecom shelter, a propane tank, and other equipment. A 6-foot screening fence will be required for this pad site as part of the building permit review process.

**STAFF ANALYSIS**

- This tower provides critical emergency communications services for the Brenham Area. It is important to keep similar height and location as the existing tower in order to continue adequate coverage.
- It would be a hardship to find a different location to relocate that provides a similar level of coverage.
- The request would not be out of character with the neighborhood. The existing tower has been in its current location for over twenty years.
- The need for the variance was not created by the applicant.
- Granting this variance will not be materially detrimental or injurious to other properties.

Notices were mailed to property owners within 200 feet of the subject property regarding these requests on May 1, 2025. Staff did not receive any phone calls, emails or written comments regarding this request.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff has reviewed the request and **recommends approval** of the requested variance to allow a tower height of 195-feet, where a maximum 150-foot height is allowed for the construction of a communications tower to be located on the property adjacent to 2401 US Highway 290 W, further described as Lot 2 of the BBEC Hwy 290 Subdivision and containing 13.384-acres.

In response to questions from Commissioners, Staff clarified the following:

- Staff are unsure as to why there is a maximum tower height of 150 feet allowed in the B-2 Zoning District.
- There was not a variance granted for the previous tower. Staff are not sure what requirements were in place at that time.
- According to FAA requirements, a tower height of 200 feet is the trigger point for tower lighting. This was confirmed with the Interim Airport Manager.
- The new tower will not emit any extra electromagnetic or radiation than the existing tower.
- At the time of permitting, Public Utilities will be consulted to ensure that this tower will not interfere with any communications atop of the existing City water towers.

Chairman Hodde opened the Public Hearing at 5:37 p.m. and asked for any comments. In response to a question from Commissioner Thielemann, the applicant's representative, Richie Cepeda, stated that there are wind load requirements that the towers are required to meet. The towers are also designed with break-away points so that if the tower does fail, it would fall away from other properties. Mr. Cepeda stated that this tower will have the same frequency as the existing tower but with new, upgraded attachments and equipment. He further stated that the additional five feet of tower height is the new standard. It also accounts for the antenna and attachments on top to keep the overall height under 200 feet. There were no other comments.

Chairman Hodde closed the Public Hearing at 5:39 p.m. and re-opened the Regular Session.

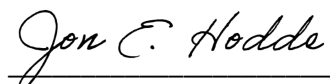
A motion was made by Commissioner Huckert and seconded by Commissioner Edmunds to approve the request by the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) for a Variance from the City of Brenham Code of Ordinances, Appendix A – Zoning, Part II, Division 2, Section 4.04(3) to allow a tower height of 195-foot, where a maximum 150-foot height is allowed for construction of a tower adjacent to 2401 US Highway 290 W, described as Lot 2 (13.384-acres) of the BBEC Hwy 290 East Subdivision, as presented. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

## 6. Adjourn

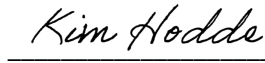
A motion was made by Commissioner Thielemann and seconded by Commissioner Winkelmann to adjourn the meeting at 5:40 p.m. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

*The City of Brenham appreciates the participation of our citizens, and the role of the Board of Adjustment in this decision-making process.*

Certification of Meeting Minutes:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jon E. Hodde, Chairman

June 9, 2025  
Meeting Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Attest, Staff Secretary

June 9, 2025  
Meeting Date