

SUPREME COURT OF LOUISIANA

Beverly Alexander; Rise St. James; Inclusive Louisiana; and Mount Triumph Baptist Church by and through Their Members v. St. James Parish

2025-C-00866 c/w 2025-C-00868 · No. 2025-C-00866 c/w 2025-C-00868 · Decided March 6, 2026

SUMMARY

The Louisiana Supreme Court reviewed St. James Parish’s approval of a methanol facility upgrade involving a pipeline through wetlands. The court held that the court of appeal erred by applying de novo review and failing to give appropriate deference to the Parish’s interpretation of its land use plan and decision. The court denied plaintiffs’ motion to dismiss under the collateral-consequences exception to mootness, vacated the court of appeal’s ruling, and rendered judgment.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Louisiana
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Weimer, C.J.; Guidry, J.; Allison H. Penzato, Justice pro tempore
JURISDICTION	Supreme Court of Louisiana
DECIDED	March 6, 2026
DOCKET	2025-C-00866 c/w 2025-C-00868
DISPOSITION	vacated
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The Louisiana Supreme Court granted consolidated writ applications challenging a divided Fifth Circuit decision that reversed the district court and remanded for further proceedings concerning Koch's land use permit. The Supreme Court denied plaintiffs' motion to dismiss on mootness grounds, vacated the court of appeal's ruling, and reinstated the district court's judgment.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Judicial review of local governmental land use decisions is deferential and applies the arbitrary-and-capricious standard, not de novo appellate review. The reviewing court asks whether the decision was made within the government's constitutional or statutory police power, whether the government abused its discretion or failed to comply with due process, and whether the result was arbitrary or capricious.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published and precedential Louisiana Supreme Court opinion

PARTIES

Koch Methanol St. James, LLC, St. James Parish v. Beverly Alexander, Rise St. James, Inclusive Louisiana, Mount Triumph Baptist Church by and through Their Members

TOPICS

municipal law

ordinances

standard of review

appellate procedure

wetlands

PRACTICE AREAS

municipal law

land use and zoning

constitutional law

appellate procedure

environmental law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether plaintiffs' challenge became moot after the Parish reconsidered and approved Koch's substantially similar land use application and the pipeline became operational.
2. Whether judicial review of a local government's land use decision is de novo or is limited to determining whether the decision was arbitrary and capricious.
3. Whether the Parish reasonably interpreted its Land Use Plan to classify Koch's pipeline connection to an existing wetlands pipeline as an allowable use subject to Tier 2 review rather than a prohibited use requiring Tier 3 review.

HOLDINGS

1. The subsequent approval of Koch's application did not moot the consolidated writ proceedings because disputed issues concerning the Parish's authority to interpret its Land Use Plan and the proper scope of judicial review remained, and correction of the court of appeal's ruling had practical precedential consequences.
2. There is no de novo review of a local governmental land use decision in the sense of an appellate court independently resolving the legal issue. The proper standard is deferential arbitrary-and-capricious review.
3. The Parish reasonably interpreted the Plan to treat a pipeline connection to an existing pipeline in wetlands as a unique situation requiring a location in the water and therefore an allowable use eligible for Tier 2 review.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“There should be no de novo review in the context of judicial review of municipal land use decisions.” (17)

“For the above reasons, the ruling of the court of appeal is vacated and the ruling of the district court is reinstated.” (20)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Koch Methanol St. James, LLC sought a permit to upgrade its existing methanol facility, including a pipeline connection to an existing third-party ethane pipeline. Approximately 1,000 feet of the connection would pass through wetlands. The Parish Planning Commission determined that the connection qualified as an allowable use under the Plan's exception for unique situations requiring a location in the water and approved the project under Tier 2 review; the Parish Council rejected plaintiffs' appeal.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The St. James Parish Planning Commission approved Koch's application under the Plan's Tier 2 review process, and the Parish Council rejected plaintiffs' appeal. The district court upheld the Parish's decision under the arbitrary-and-capricious standard. The Fifth Circuit reversed, concluding that the proposed wetlands use required Tier 3 review. While the writ applications were pending, Koch submitted a substantially similar application, which the Parish approved after Tier 3 review; the Supreme Court nevertheless applied the collateral-consequences exception to mootness, reached the merits, vacated the appellate ruling, and reinstated the district court's judgment.

DISPOSITION

vacated

CASES CITED

- Alexander v. St. James Parish, 24-557 (La. App. 5 Cir. 5/14/25), 415 So.3d 437
- Alexander v. St. James Parish, 25-0866 (La. 10/22/25), 421 So.3d 883
- Alexander v. St. James Parish, 25-0868 (La. 10/22/25), 421 So.3d 883
- Shepherd v. Schedler, 15-1750 (La. 1/27/16), 209 So.3d 752, 764
- Cat's Meow, Inc. v. City of New Orleans, Department of Finance, 98-0601 (La. 10/20/98), 720 So.2d 1186, 1193, 1196
- Ulrich v. Robinson, 18-0534 (La. 3/26/19), 282 So.3d 180, 188-89
- First National Bank of Picayune v. Pearl River Fabricators, Inc., 06-2195 (La. 11/16/07), 971 So.2d 302, 308
- Watson v. Banguel, 21-01793 (La. 2/8/22), 332 So.3d 632
- In re Interdiction of Raspanti, 24-166 (La. App. 5 Cir. 12/4/24), 410 So.3d 282, 286-87
- St. Charles Parish School Board v. GAF Corp., 512 So.2d 1165, 1171-72 (La. 1987) (on rehearing)
- Four State Realty Co., Inc. v. City of Baton Rouge, 309 So.2d 659, 664-65 (La. 1974)
- State ex rel. Civello v. City of New Orleans, 97 So. 440, 443-44 (La. 1923)
- Palermo Land Co. v. Planning Commission of Calcasieu Parish, 561 So.2d 482, 491-92 (La. 1990)
- King v. Caddo Parish Commission, 97-1873 (La. 10/20/98), 719 So.2d 410, 416-18
- Toups v. City of Shreveport, 10-1559 (La. 3/15/11), 60 So.3d 1215, 1218, 1220
- Glomax, LLC v. Lafayette Consolidated Government, 24-183 (La. App. 3 Cir. 11/27/24), 403 So.3d 32, 37, writ denied, 24-01587 (La. 4/8/25), 405 So.3d 573
- Garber v. City of New Orleans Through City Planning Commission, 16-1298 (La. App. 4 Cir. 12/13/17), 234 So.3d 992, 996-97

- City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge v. Myers, 13-2011 (La. 5/7/14), 145 So.3d 320, 327-28
- Louisiana Seafood Management Council v. Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Commission, 97-1367 (La. 5/19/98), 715 So.2d 387, 394
- City of New Orleans v. Elms, 566 So.2d 626, 632 (La. 1990)

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