

PUTNAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



117 Putnam Drive, Suite A ♦ Eatonton, GA 31024

Minutes

Friday, February 2, 2024 ♦ 10:00 AM

Putnam County Administration Building – Room 203

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on Friday, February 2, 2024, at approximately 10:00 a.m. in the Putnam County Administration Building, 117 Putnam Drive, Room 203, Eatonton, Georgia.

PRESENT

Chairman Bill Sharp
Commissioner Gary McElhenney
Commissioner Daniel Brown
Commissioner Steve Hersey
Commissioner Jeff Wooten

STAFF PRESENT

County Attorney Adam Nelson
Deputy County Clerk Donna Todd

STAFF ABSENT

County Manager Paul Van Haute
County Clerk Lynn Butterworth

Opening

1. Welcome - Call to Order

Chairman Sharp called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 a.m.

(Copy of agenda made a part of the minutes on minute book page _____.)

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the Agenda.

Motion made by Commissioner Brown, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

3. Invocation - Brandon Walton, Bible Fellowship Church

Mr. Brandon Walton, Pastor of Bible Fellowship Church, gave the invocation.

4. Pledge of Allegiance (GM)

Commissioner McElhenney led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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5. Special Presentation - Proclamation for Barry Fleming

Chairman Sharp read a proclamation honoring Barry Fleming and presented him with a picture of a laser-engraved gavel and block set that will be delivered to him. In response, Mr. Fleming addressed the board, thanking them for the proclamation and the gift. He also thanked former Commissioner Janie Reid and Commissioner Steve Hersey for the original motion and second to allow he and Attorney Adam Nelson to serve as County Attorneys for Putnam County. Mr. Fleming stated he has consistently used Putnam County as an example of best practices and things done right. He stated he was honored to be a part of Putnam County for a few years. (Copy of proclamation made a part of the minutes on minute book page _____.)

6. Special Presentation - Chamber of Commerce 2023 Year-End Report - Maggie Milner

Ms. Maggie Milner, President of the Eatonton-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce, gave a presentation highlighting new businesses, visitors, and engagement statistics for Eatonton and Putnam County in 2023. She also spoke about the 2024 Leadership Putnam class and proudly reported that the class will accomplish four class projects by the time they graduate to include gifting 144 turkeys to families in Putnam County for Thanksgiving and providing parents of about five families at Christmas the opportunity to buy gifts for their children. (Copy of report made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

7. Special Presentation - Recreation Update (staff-SH)

Mr. Scott Haley, Recreation Director, gave a presentation showcasing the various sports and activities Putnam County citizens are enjoying at the Recreation Department. His presentation also consisted of a possible site and design of pickleball courts at the Administration Building, and update on the progress made at Jimmy Davis Park. Mr. Haley introduced Mr. Tweedy Parham, the new Grounds Maintenance Supervisor at Jimmy Davis Park. Immediately following Mr. Haley's presentation, Ms. Carol Neff distributed a document to Commissioners and presented information about the pickleball teams and players in the community. She encouraged the commissioners to proceed with the construction of the new pickleball court. Ms. Neff also answered questions about the pickleball program and invited the Commissioners to give pickleball a try. (Copy of presentation made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

8. Special Presentation - Councilwoman Reid - Oconee Behavioral Health Board

Councilwoman Janie Reid presented a brief update on the Oconee Behavioral Health Board. She reported that Director Kevin Tanner has taken notice of some discrepancies in operations. As a result, Oconee Behavioral Health Board is undergoing an assessment under the direction of someone from River Edge Behavioral Health. Councilwoman Reid also reported that the Oconee Behavioral Health Board is still providing care to clients.

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Chairman Sharp invited Sheriff Howard Sills to speak about the FLOCK cameras that were approved for purchase at the January 16, 2024 meeting. Sheriff Sills explained that the FLOCK cameras are license plate readers. The cameras read the tags on vehicles and check for wanted or stolen vehicles. He reported that the Sheriff's office has solved a lot of crime just by using the two cameras on Highway 44. Department of Transportation approval is required to put the cameras on state routes but we decide where they are placed. The cost is about \$2500 per year per camera. Chairman Sharp thanked the sheriff for the information and for the excellent job he and his staff do.

Regular Business Meeting

9. Public Comments

Mr. Brett Boston spoke about pickleball and its popularity. He reported that the former Belk store in the old Macon Mall is now a large pickleball court and is always packed. He emphasized that pickleball is a sport that unites people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Mr. Frank May spoke about dispelling the rumors regarding the proposed pickleball courts. He asked for reassurance and accurate information concerning the construction of the courts. He said the pickleball players of the community would be happy to assist the Commissioners in any way possible to make this proposed pickleball court a reality. He encouraged and invited the Commissioners to come to the Recreation Department when the players are playing pickleball to personally see just how many of Putnam County's citizens love the sport.

Ms. Kelley Chitwood reported that there are counties with dedicated pickleball courts, while Putnam has none. She urged the Commissioners to move ahead with the pickleball courts because they are needed.

10. Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Minutes - January 5, 2024 (staff-CC)
- b. Approval of Minutes - January 16, 2024 (staff-CC)

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

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11. Authorization for Chairman to sign a letter for a public water supply system (staff-CA)
Mr. Rick McAllister spoke on the water letter authorization stating that permission to drill a test well is sought. For the well to be drilled, a number of requirements have to be met. One requirement is to provide written certification that the local government is in concurrence with the water system development project and that no evidence of legal dumping or former landfill was found on site.

Mr. Billy Webster spoke about the letter. He questioned the use of the word project without identifying what the project is.

County Attorney Nelson spoke on the item, the requirements, and the need for local government approval. Local approval is needed to obtain Department of Natural Resources approval for a public water system. There is some discretion as to how the requirement for the regulation is met. The regulation involved does require the BOC approval before a public water system can be provided. The project is part of a hotel development, there is a concept plan in place, BOC approval is required before drilling can begin.

Motion to authorize the Chairman to sign a letter for a public water supply system.

Motion made by Commissioner Brown, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Wooten

Voting Nay: Commissioner Hersey

(Copy of letter made a part of the minutes on minute book page _____.)

12. Authorization for Chairman to sign a letter to be sent to the City of Eatonton to discuss SPLOST #10 projects (staff-CA)

County Attorney Nelson explained the purpose of the letter to the City of Eatonton is to notify the city of the necessity for a meeting to decide and discuss SPLOST#10 projects before presented to the public for a vote. A meeting date and time have not been set at this time. County Attorney Nelson will confirm with County Manager Van Haute as to when SPLOST#9 ends.

Motion to authorize the Chairman to sign a letter to be sent to the City of Eatonton to discuss SPLOST#10 projects.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

(Copy of letter made a part of the minutes on minute book page _____.)

13. Update for plan for replacement of House Bill 300 with local legislation (staff-CA)

Mr. Billy Webster inquired about the proposed updates. County Attorney Nelson spoke and explained that Mr. Webster's comments may be better addressed after the proposed changes/updates have been discussed. County Attorney Nelson provided a document wherein some proposed changes, from Commissioner Hersey, had been applied and explained that the draft ordinance would allow the Board, as a body, to home rule with respect to how officials are compensated. The same existing rule will be applied but will be put in local ordinance form. The ordinance public hearing will be on the February 20, 2024 meeting agenda for public comment. County Attorney Nelson requested that any proposed changes or updates be sent to him. Mr. Billy Webster questioned whether the advertised changes needed to be published in the newspaper. No action was taken.

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14. Commissioner Nominations for appointment to MGRC Aging Advisory Council (BS)
Chairman Sharp asked for nominations for appointment to the MGRC Aging Advisory Council.
Motion to nominate Commissioner Hersey to the MGRC Aging Advisory Council.

Motion made by Commissioner Wooten, Seconded by Commissioner Brown

Commissioner Hersey respectfully declined to serve on the MGRC Aging Advisory Council.
Chairman Sharp felt the nomination could be delayed if Commissioner Hersey knew of someone to nominate. County Attorney Nelson advised that since it was an advisory council, the requirements for nomination could be reviewed to see what is required.

Commissioner Wooten withdrew the motion to nominate Commissioner Hersey to serve on the MGRC Advisory Council. Commissioner Brown consented to the withdrawal of the motion.

No action was taken on this item.

Reports/Announcements

15. County Manager Report

No report. County Manager Van Haute was not present at the meeting.

16. County Attorney Report

County Attorney Nelson requested an Executive Session to discuss one litigation matter after Commissioner Announcements.

17. Commissioner Announcements

Commissioner McElhenney: none

Commissioner Brown: reminded all in attendance that the Town Hall Meeting to discuss Jimmy Davis Park and to vote on the playground equipment for the park will be held on February 9, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Hersey: wished all in attendance a Happy Groundhog Day and hoped there would be an early spring.

Commissioner Wooten: thanked Public Works for their hard work and dedication and thanked Human Resources Director Cynthia Miller for reminding us to wear something red for heart health week. Ms. Miller does an outstanding job on keeping everyone up to date on ways to stay healthy. He also thanked Planning and Development Director Lisa Jackson and her Assistant Director Courtney Andrews for their excellent work.

Chairman Sharp: announced that there was a great article about Putnam County in the January issue of James Magazine. He encouraged all in attendance to read it. He also asked for continued prayers for County Clerk Lynn Butterworth. She is grateful for everyone's prayers.

County Attorney Nelson announced that SPLOST#9 ends October 1, 2025, and that SPLOST#10 needs to be in place by then.

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18. Enter Executive Session as allowed by O.C.G.A. 50-14-4 for Personnel, Litigation, or Real Estate

Motion to enter Executive Session as allowed by O.C.G.A. 50-14-4 for Litigation.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

Meeting closed at approximately 12:01 p.m.

19. Reopen meeting following Executive Session

Motion to reopen the meeting following Executive Session.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

Meeting reconvened at approximately 12:27 p.m.

20. Authorize Chairman to sign affidavit concerning the subject matter of the closed portion of the meeting

Motion to authorize the Chairman to sign the Affidavit concerning the subject matter of the closed portion of the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Brown

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

(Copy of affidavit made a part of the minutes on minute book page _____.)

21. Action, if any, resulting from the Executive Session

No action taken.

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Closing

18. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten

**Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hersey,
Commissioner Wooten**

Meeting adjourned at approximately 12:28 p.m.

ATTEST:

Donna Todd
Deputy County Clerk

B. W. “Bill” Sharp
Chairman

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