

PUTNAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



117 Putnam Drive, Suite A ♦ Eatonton, GA 31024

Minutes

Tuesday, January 20, 2026 ♦ 6:00 PM

Putnam County Administration Building – Room 203

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at approximately 6:00 PM in the Putnam County Administration Building, 117 Putnam Drive, Room 203, Eatonton, Georgia.

PRESENT

Chairman Bill Sharp
Commissioner Tom McElhenney
Commissioner Richard Garrett
Commissioner Steve Hersey
Commissioner Jeff Wooten

STAFF PRESENT

County Attorney Adam Nelson
County Manager Paul Van Haute
County Clerk Lynn Butterworth

STAFF ABSENT

Deputy County Clerk Mercy Fluker

Opening

1. Welcome - Call to Order

Chairman Sharp called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.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 McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

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

3. Invocation - Pastor Fred Lowe, Zion Covenant Fellowship Church

Pastor Fred Lowe, Zion Covenant Fellowship Church, gave the invocation.

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4. Pledge of Allegiance (staff)
County Manager Van Haute led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Regular Business Meeting

5. Public Comments

Ms. Barb Vargo commented on employment and the 250th anniversary of the country.

6. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Minutes - December 16, 2025 Regular Meeting (staff-CC)

b. Approval of 2026 Alcohol Licenses (staff-CC)

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion made by Commissioner Wooten, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Wooten

Voting Abstaining: Commissioner Hersey

(Copy of alcohol licenses made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

7. Chairman's Appointment of the Vice Chairman of the Board of Commissioners (BS)

Chairman Sharp appointed Commissioner Tom McElhenney as Vice Chairman of the Board of Commissioners for 2026.

8. Appointment to the Eatonton-Putnam Water and Sewer Authority (staff-CC)

Ms. Jennifer Ray commented on EPWSA membership.

Commissioner Hersey, seconded by Commissioner Garrett, nominated William Spani for appointment to the Eatonton-Putnam Water and Sewer Authority.

Commissioner Wooten, seconded by Commissioner Garrett, nominated David Stickley for appointment to the Eatonton-Putnam Water and Sewer Authority.

Commissioner McElhenney, seconded by Commissioner Garrett, nominated Jay Bowden for appointment to the Eatonton-Putnam Water and Sewer Authority.

Chairman Sharp called for the vote. Commissioner McElhenney voted for Jay Bowden. Commissioner Garrett voted for Jay Bowden. Commissioner Hersey voted for William Spani. Commissioner Wooten voted for Jay Bowden.

Mr. Jay Bowden was appointed to the Eatonton-Putnam Water and Sewer Authority.

9. Authorization for Chairman to sign Memorandum of Understanding Between Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia by and on behalf of The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension and Putnam County (staff-CM)

County Extension Agent Keith Fielder signed in to answer questions.

Motion to authorize the Chairman to sign the Memorandum of Understanding between the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia by and on behalf of The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension and Putnam County.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey.

Motion amended to make sure all county references in the MOU are Putnam County.

Amended motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

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Voting Yea on motion as amended: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

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10. Authorization for Chairman to sign a Resolution by the Governing Authority of Putnam County Setting Qualifying Fees for the 2026 Election and Authorizing Publication of the Same (staff-CC)

Motion to authorize the Chairman to sign a Resolution by the Governing Authority of Putnam County Setting Qualifying Fees for the 2026 Election and Authorizing Publication of the Same.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey.

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

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

11. Authorization for Chairman to sign an updated Resolution for the Purpose of Naming an Open Records Officer and an Alternate Open Records Officer (staff-CC)

Motion to authorize the Chairman to sign an updated Resolution for the Purpose of Naming an Open Records Officer and an Alternate Open Records Officer.

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

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

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

12. Authorization for staff to schedule a Public Hearing on proposed changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances - Chapter 46 (Roads, Bridges and Other Public Property) (TM/PCSO)

Motion to authorize staff to schedule a Public Hearing on proposed changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances - Chapter 46 (Roads, Bridges and Other Public Property).

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

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

(Copy of proposed changes made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

13. Authorization for staff to schedule a Public Hearing on proposed changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances - Chapter 2 (Administration) (Postponed from the December 5, 2025 BOC meeting) (staff-CA)

Comments on the proposed changes were made by: Mr. Billy Webster, Ms. Jennifer Ray, Mr. Bill Vargo, Ms. Barb Vargo, Mr. Charles Ray, Ms. Erin Olson, and Mr. Dale Bills.

Motion to authorize staff to schedule a Public Hearing on proposed changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances - Chapter 2 (Administration) as shown in the meeting packet with the following change: remove the proposed changes to Section 2-42(a) related to public comments.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten

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Motion amended to keep the change in Section 2-42(a) regarding the use of county equipment.

Amended motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett

Vote on amended motion:

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Wooten

Voting Nay: Commissioner Hersey

Motion amended to remove the striking of the Recreation in Sections 2-141 through 2-150.

Amended motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett

Vote on amended motion:

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey,

Commissioner Wooten

Motion amended to remove additions in Section 2-37 that read “one item” and “No items may be commented upon by a single commissioner for a period of time in excess of ten minutes (unless granted additional time by the chairperson).”

Amended motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey

Vote on amended motion:

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey,

Commissioner Wooten

Vote on original motion as amended:

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Wooten

Voting Abstain: Commissioner Hersey

14. Request to amend the approved minutes of the December 5, 2025 BOC Regular Meeting (RG)

Mr. Bill Vargo and Ms. Barb Vargo clarified their public comments made at the December 5, 2025 BOC meeting.

Motion to authorize staff to make an annotation to the official minutes of the December 5, 2025 BOC meeting to change the Public Comment summary of Mr. and Mrs. Vargo’s comments to the following:

“Mr. Bill Vargo commented on his property tax bill and a dispute with the Planning & Development department regarding a Georgia Power dredging permit.

Ms. Barbara Vargo also commented on a dispute with the Planning & Development department regarding a Georgia Power dredging permit.”

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

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

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15. Discussion and possible action to rescind the motion of December 16, 2025 regarding adopting a C-PACER program (SH)

Ms. Barb Vargo commented in favor of the C-PACER program.

Motion to rescind the motion of December 16, 2025 regarding authorization to sign a C-PACER Resolution and to schedule a Town Hall on the C-PACER program for Putnam County within 30 days.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Hersey

Voting Nay: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Wooten

Motion to have Commissioner Hersey work with the County Attorney to set out concerns with the C-PACER Resolution articulated at this meeting and amend the resolution and come back to the board with amended resolution and schedule a C-PACER town hall meeting within 30 days and to restrain the Chairman from signing any C-PACER IGA for 30 days.

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Wooten

Voting Nay: Commissioner Hersey

Reports/Announcements

16. County Manager Report

No report.

17. County Attorney Report

No report, but Executive Session needed for real estate and litigation.

18. Commissioner Announcements

Commissioner McElhenney: announced he attended ACCG training last Friday, encouraged other commissioners to attend trainings, and passed out the 2026 ACCG Training Calendar

Commissioner Garrett: announced he attended the Martin Luther King Jr. event at Butler Baker and explained that he would like to see a wider cross section of people and for the event to be held at the Courthouse like it used to be, and encouraged everyone to go see Hairspray at the Plaza

Commissioner Hersey: none

Commissioner Wooten: none

Chairman Sharp: thanked everyone for attending

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Executive Session

19. 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 and Real Estate.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

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

Meeting closed at approximately 8:58 p.m.

20. Reopen meeting following Executive Session

Motion to reopen the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

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

Meeting reconvened at approximately 9:26 p.m.

21. Execute Affidavit concerning the subject matter of the closed portion of the meeting

Motion to execute the Affidavit concerning the subject matter of the closed portion of the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

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

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

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

No action taken.

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Closing

23. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

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

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:28 p.m.

ATTEST:

Lynn Butterworth
County Clerk

B. W. "Bill" Sharp
Chairman

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