

PUTNAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



117 Putnam Drive, Suite A ♦ Eatonton, GA 31024

Minutes

Tuesday, February 20, 2024 ♦ 6:00 PM

Putnam County Administration Building – Room 203

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at approximately 6:00 p.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
County Manager Paul Van Haute
Deputy County Clerk Donna Todd

STAFF ABSENT

County Clerk Lynn Butterworth

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 Brown, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

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

3. Invocation

Dr. Craig Williamson from the First Baptist Church of Eatonton gave the invocation.

4. Pledge of Allegiance (GM)

Commissioner McElhenney led the pledge of allegiance.

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5. Special Presentation - Findings from 2023 Audit Report (McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks & Co, LLC)

Mr. Pat Muse gave the report on the results of the 2023 Audit. He provided the Commissioners with a book of findings from the 2023 Audit. Mr. Muse also presented a PowerPoint presentation, highlighting the main points and findings of the audit.

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

Ordinance Public Hearing

6. Proposed adoption of changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances Section 2-54 - Compensation (CA)

County Attorney Nelson presented information on an amendment to create an ordinance setting compensation for the members of the Board of Commissioners. The ordinance brings compensation to the local level but does not change the amount. The reason for the change is due to the legislature meeting, which is the only time we have to make changes to the compensation. The current legislation sets certain limits that are not necessarily reflective of inflation or other costs. The attempt is to bring that to a local level and allow this body to have control.

Mr. Billy Webster opposed the changes to the code of ordinances stating the Board would be taking action to enrich themselves in their current office.

Motion to adopt changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances Section 2-54 – Compensation.

Motion made by Commissioner Brown, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Motion amended to strike the references to EPWSA and SWA from Section B of the ordinance.

Amended motion made by Commissioner Hersey.

County Attorney Nelson clarified that the intention was not to provide additional compensation, but to clarify that the mentions of EPWSA and SWA in the ordinance would not be included as compensation. He further advised that if there were no objections from other members of the board, the amendment would be made part of the original motion.

Commissioner Brown objected to the amended motion and requested that his original motion stand as it is.

Amended motion seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Nay: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Wooten

Voting Yea: Commissioner Hersey

Amended motion fails.

Commissioner Wooten commented that he wanted it recorded that he does not receive payment from Putnam County and Sinclair Water Authority. He stated he is separate from the County when he serves on that board. They provide compensation for his time on their board.

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Vote on original motion:

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Wooten

Voting Nay: Commissioner Hersey

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

Regular Business Meeting

7. Public Comments

Mr. Miller Edwards – Asked the board for help with a neighbor who has a very loud sound system that shakes the windows in his house. He stated there are also bright and flashing lights coming from the house, which also disturb him and other surrounding neighbors. He also stated the neighbor has fish lights that, when they're on, no one can see anything when entering the cove. The use of blackout curtains does not remedy the problem. Mr. Edwards stated that he had met with the Sheriff about this problem.

8. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Minutes - February 2, 2024 Regular Meeting (staff-CC)

b. Approval of Minutes - February 2, 2024 Executive Session (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

9. Requests for Waiver of Late Fees and Interest from Mr. and Mrs. Raghu Kakarala and Ms. Dolores Walker (Tax Commissioner)

Tax Commissioner Terrell Abernathy presented information about Mr. and Mrs. Raghu Kakarala and Ms. Dolores Walker, who attempted to pay their property taxes on time, by U.S. Mail, and had their property tax payments stolen. In both cases, both checks were intercepted between the post office and the Tax Commissioner’s office.

Motion to waive the late fees and interest from Mr. and Mrs. Raghu Kakarala and Ms. Dolores Walker.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

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

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10. Discussion and possible action regarding the purchase of playground equipment for Jimmy Davis Park (staff-CM)

Mr. Billy Webster signed in to speak on this item but passed on his opportunity to speak when called.

County Manager Van Haute spoke about the equipment and how the people voted almost unanimously for the set selected. The cost of the playground equipment is \$50,534.90 and will be purchased with SPLOST 9 funds. The swing set will be kept but moved.

Motion to approve the purchase of the playground equipment for Jimmy Davis Park in the amount of \$50,534.90 under SPLOST #9.

Motion made by Commissioner Brown, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

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

(Copy of playground equipment photo and cost estimate made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

11. Authorization to allow staff to advertise for Jimmy Davis Park Partnership Advisory Council (DB)

Commissioner Brown asked if he had to advertise or if he could choose the people on the council since it is not a board. County Attorney Nelson looked up the requirements for starting the council. County Attorney Nelson asked Chairman Sharp to switch item 11 with item 12 to allow adequate time for him to research the matter concerning the advertisement or choice of people to serve on the council.

Motion to temporarily table item #11, which will be revisited after item #12.

Motion made by Commissioner Brown, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten

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

12. Discussion and possible action allowing the City of Eatonton gas department to operate in the county right-of-way (staff-CM)

County Manager Van Haute reported that this item represented the City of Eatonton’s project to provide gas to Georgia Power and they will be operating in the county right-of-way.

Motion to allow the City of Eatonton gas department to operate in the county right-of-way as specified in the drawings provided.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

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

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

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Back to agenda item #11

11. Authorization to allow staff to advertise for Jimmy Davis Park Partnership Advisory Council (DB) – Continued...

Upon returning to the item, County Attorney Nelson advised that under Putnam County Ordinances, section 2-51, the Chairman is allowed, with concurrence of the board to create committees to study any issue. The membership can include staff, elected officials, or citizens at large. There is no requirement to advertise for the positions prior to the appointment.

Appointments to boards, authorities, require advertisement under section 2-53. He advised that Commissioner Brown can make appointments prior to advertisement. It is likely the council would be required by state law to follow the open meetings act.

Motion to create a Jimmy Davis Park Partnership Advisory Committee.

Motion made by Commissioner Brown, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Commissioner Hersey pointed out that the agenda item speaks to advertising for, not creating, an advisory council.

County Attorney Nelson advised Chairman Sharp that when an issue comes up regarding interpretation of procedures, the final decision lies with the Board. The question the Board needs to consider is whether the action of creating the Council was included in the agenda item.

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

13. Discussion of road projects approved under TSPLOST #2 (SH)

Commissioner Hersey presented information on how the board might split the solicitations to avoid borrowing money against money we already have.

(SPLOST comparison spreadsheet and proposed calculations made a part of the minute book on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

Reports/Announcements

14. County Manager Report

County Manager Van Haute offered congratulations to Finance Director Linda Cook and her team for another successful audit. The Short-Term Rental Vehicles are parked outside the building and ready to go. Deputy County Clerk Donna Todd and other staff attended training for the STR software. The new software can determine how many homes are being rented as short term rentals.

15. County Attorney Report

County Attorney Nelson requested an Executive Session to discuss one legal matter.

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16. Commissioner Announcements
Commissioner McElhenney: none.

Commissioner Brown: none.

Commissioner Hersey: Reminded everyone that early voting began yesterday (February 19). On the ballot are the Presidential primary choices and the \$22 million General Obligation bonds.

Commissioner Wooten: none.

Chairman Sharp: Thanked everyone for coming.

17. 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 Wooten.

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

Meeting closed at approximately 7:59 p.m.

18. Reopen meeting following Executive Session

Motion to reopen the meeting following Executive Session.

Motion made by Commissioner Brown, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten

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

Meeting reconvened at approximately 8:18 p.m.

19. 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 Wooten, 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 _____.)

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

No action taken.

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Closing

17. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Brown.

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

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:20 p.m.

ATTEST:

Donna Todd
Deputy County Clerk

B. W. "Bill" Sharp
Chairman

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