

PUTNAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



117 Putnam Drive, Suite A ♦ Eatonton, GA 31024

Minutes

Friday, March 6, 2026 ♦ 10:00 AM

Putnam County Administration Building – Room 203

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on Friday, March 6, 2026 at approximately 10:00 AM 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

ABSENT

Commissioner Jeff Wooten

STAFF PRESENT

County Attorney Adam Nelson
County Manager Paul Van Haute
County Clerk Lynn Butterworth
Deputy County Clerk Mercy Fluker

Opening

1. Welcome - Call to Order

Chairman Sharp called the meeting to order at approximately 10:01 a.m.

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

2. Approval of Agenda

County Manager requested to remove the Audit Presentation (item 11) due to paperwork delays and informed the commissioners we would move the Audit Presentation to the March 17, 2026 Regular Meeting.

Motion to approve the agenda with the removal of the Audit Presentation(item 11).

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

3. Invocation - Brandon Walton, Bible Fellowship Church

Pastor Brandon Walton from Bible Fellowship Church gave the invocation.

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4. Pledge of Allegiance (RG)

Commissioner Garrett led the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. Special Presentation - Theatre in Our Schools Month Proclamation

The commissioners presented a proclamation declaring the month of March as Theatre in Our Schools Month to Putnam County High School student and Georgia Thespians State Thespian Officer Sophia Kelly.

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

6. Special Presentation - Government Finance Professionals Week Proclamation

The commissioners presented a proclamation declaring the third week of March as Government Finance Professionals Week to the Finance Department.

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

Regular Business Meeting

7. Public Comments

Mr. Charles Gray commented on liaisons for boards and authorities.

Ms. Barb Vargo commented on bullying and last night's Planning and Zoning Commission meeting.

8. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Minutes - February 17, 2026 Regular Meeting (staff-CC)

b. Approval of Minutes - February 17, 2026 Executive Session (staff-CC)

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

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

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

9. Presentation from the Eatonton-Putnam Water & Sewer Authority (staff-CC)

Eatonton-Putnam Water & Sewer Authority Project Manager Brice Doolittle gave the presentation.

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

10. FY 2025 Budget Amendment (staff-Finance)

Finance Director Jennifer Fricks explained the budget amendment as recommended from the auditor.

Motion to approve the FY 2025 Budget Amendment.

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

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11. Audit Presentation (staff-Finance)

This item was removed from the agenda.

12. Request for Waiver of Late Fees and Interest for Ms. Marlene Nesselbush (Tax Commissioner)

Tax Commissioner Terrell Abernathy explained the request and recommended the commissioners deny waiving the interest.

Ms. Nesselbush joined via telephone and explained she never received the bills due to the mail not being forwarded correctly.

Motion to deny the Request for Waiver of Late Fees and Interest for Ms. Marlene Nesselbush.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Chairman Sharp, Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Hersey

Voting Nay: Commissioner Garrett

13. Approval of Right-of-Way Permit Request by AT&T for work on Harmony Road (staff-PW)
Public Works Office and Permit Manager Rindi Daniel explained the permit request.

Motion to approve the Right-of-Way Permit Request by AT&T for work on Harmony Road.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

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

14. Approval of Right-of-Way Permit Request from Tri-County for work on Scott Road (staff-PW)

Public Works Office and Permit Manager Rindi Daniel explained the permit request.

Motion to approve the Right-of-Way Permit Request from Tri-County for work on Scott Road.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

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

15. Approval of Right-of-Way Permit Request from Georgia Power for work on Rockville Road (staff-PW)

Public Works Office and Permit Manager Rindi Daniel explained the permit request.

Motion to approve the Right-of-Way Permit Request from Georgia Power for work on Rockville Road.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

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

16. Authorization for Chairman to sign FY 2026 Transit Trust Fund Project (staff-Transit)

Transit Director Dianne Pounds explained the project which includes a grant from Georgia Department of Transportation.

Motion to authorize the Chairman to sign the FY 2026 Transit Trust Fund Project.

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Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.
Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

17. Authorization for staff to schedule a Public Hearing on proposed changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances - Chapter 32 (Fire Protection and Prevention) (staff-Fire)
Mr. Bill Vargo commented on concerns about the proposed code changes.

County Attorney Nelson and Chief McClain provided context about the proposed changes.
Motion to authorize staff to schedule a Public Hearing on proposed changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances - Chapter 32 (Fire Protection and Prevention).
Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey.
Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey
(Copy of proposed changes made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

18. Appointment to the Putnam Development Authority (staff-CC)
Commissioner Hersey nominated Ashley Beddingfield, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.
Commissioner Garrett nominated Larry Gregory Manley III, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.
Commissioner McElhenney voted for Mr. Larry Gregory Manley III.
Commissioner Garrett voted for Mr. Larry Gregory Manley III.
Commissioner Hersey voted for Ashley Beddingfield.
Chairman Sharp voted for Mr. Larry Gregory Manley III.

Mr. Larry Gregory Manley III was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Brice Doolittle on the Putnam Development Authority.

19. Discussion and possible action on revisiting the non-project specific recommendations made by the Putnam County Planning & Development Director (Lisa Jackson) on p128 of the Board Packet for the Board of Commissioners meeting on February 17, 2026 (RG)
Mr. Bill Vargo signed in to speak but passed on commenting.

Commissioner Garrett explained the item, including concerns of overdevelopment in some areas of the county and that these three recommendations for staff are a good start for revisiting the comprehensive plan in 2027.

Motion to authorize staff to:

- 1. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the County's main arterial roads to evaluate existing conditions, growth trends, and development pressures.**
- 2. Develop a list of community-compatible land uses that are appropriate for properties fronting these arterial corridors.**
- 3. Adopt this list and establish overlay districts along key arterial roads, providing clear expectations for future rezonings while balancing the interests of residents, businesses, and other property owners.**

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

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Motion amended to take out “Adopt this list and establish” and add “Propose” to item #3. Motion amended by Commissioner Garrett, Second Commissioner McElhenney agreed to amendment.

Motion amended to instruct staff to provide an update at the June 5, 2026 Regular Meeting.

Motion amended by Commissioner Garrett, Second Commissioner McElhenney agreed to amendment.

Voting Yea (on original motion as amended): Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

20. Discussion and possible action regarding Judge Bradley's Order (SH)

Commissioner Hersey explained Judge Bradley's order and announced that he has identified two individuals who are capable of doing the evaluation, in addition to the individual that the Putnam Development Authority has identified.

Motion to authorize the County Attorney to enter an Amicus Brief, or its equivalent, with Judge Bradley and the PDA naming individuals who could comply with the Judge's order regarding Case: 2025-SU-CV-0191.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Voting Nay: Commissioner McElhenney, Chairman Sharp

Motion failed.

Reports/Announcements

21. County Manager Report

No report.

22. County Attorney Report

County Attorney Nelson informed the commissioners that changes are being made to the C-PACER Resolution documents with Greene County and he hopes to present those soon.

23. Commissioner Announcements

Commissioner McElhenney reminded everyone about the Kinderhook Fire Department meeting on March 14th.

Commissioner Garrett reminded everyone about the Butler Baker Alumni Association Annual Luncheon on March 28th at noon.

Commissioner Hersey announced that the rock quarry applicants postponed their rezoning request to July 4th weekend.

Chairman Sharp announced there is an error on the 2026 Board of Commissioners Meeting Calendar and there is no meeting on April 3, 2026 due to the county being closed on Good Friday, therefore there is only one meeting in April. Chairman Sharp also thanked everyone for coming.

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Closing

24. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Chairman Sharp, Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett

Voting Nay: Commissioner Hersey

Meeting adjourned at approximately 12:42 p.m.

ATTEST:

Mercy Fluker
Deputy County Clerk

B. W. “Bill” Sharp
Chairman

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