

PUTNAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



117 Putnam Drive, Suite A ♦ Eatonton, GA 31024

Minutes

Tuesday, August 19, 2025 ♦ 6:00 PM

Putnam County Administration Building – Room 203

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, August 19, 2025 at approximately 6:00 p.m. 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 6:01 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

Ms. Cynthia Wallace gave the invocation.

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4. Pledge of Allegiance (TM)

Commissioner McElhenney led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Zoning Public Hearing

Chairman Sharp opened the Zoning Public Hearing at approximately 6:05 p.m.

5. Request by Bailey Lively, agent for Betty Weem, for a conditional use at 671 Twin Bridges Road, presently zoned AG [Map 057, Parcel 010, District 4] (staff-P&D)

Ms. Bailey Lively spoke in support of this request. No one signed in to speak against this item. Planning and Development staff recommendation was for approval for a conditional use at 671 Twin Bridges Road, presently zoned AG [Map 057, Parcel 010, District 4].

Motion to approve the request by Bailey Lively, agent for Betty Weem, for a conditional use at 671 Twin Bridges Road, presently zoned AG [Map 057, Parcel 010, District 4].

Motion made by Commissioner Wooten, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey.

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

6. Request by Rick McAllister, agent for Imperial Park Holdings, LLC, to rezone 3.0 acres at 301 New Phoenix Road from AG to C-1 [Map 105, Part of Parcel 019, District 1] (staff-P&D)

Mr. Rick McAllister spoke in support of this request. Ms. Barb Vargo also spoke in support. The following individuals spoke against this item: Ms. Sharron Callahan (handout), Ms. Susan Mitchell, Mr. Joey Wood, Ms. Lynn Youngblood, Mr. Don Sadler, Ms. Maria Sine, Mr. Billy Webster, Ms. Erin Olson, Ms. Jennifer Ray. Mr. McAllister used the remainder of his time to respond to comments.

Planning and Development staff recommendation was for approval to rezone 3.0 acres at 301 New Phoenix Road from AG to C-1 [Map 105, Part of Parcel 019, District 1] with the following conditions:

1. The property must be used for the purpose stated in the filed application, unless approved by the Board of Commissioners.
2. The developer shall install both a right turn lane and left turn lane, on Old Phoenix and New Phoenix Road, per state and local guidelines.
3. This rezoning shall be conditioned upon the resurveying and recordation in the Superior Court of Putnam County of an accurate plat within 120 days of approval by the board of commissioners. A copy of the recorded plat shall be filed with the planning and development department director. Failure to file a plat pursuant to this subsection shall have the effect of invalidating the rezoning action.
4. Failure to abide by the stated conditions shall cause the property to revert to the Agriculture designation.

Motion to deny the request by Rick McAllister, agent for Imperial Park Holdings, LLC, to rezone 3.0 acres at 301 New Phoenix Road from AG to C-1 [Map 105, Part of Parcel 019, District 1].

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Voting Nay: Chairman Sharp, Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Wooten

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Motion to table the request by Rick McAllister, agent for Imperial Park Holdings, LLC, to rezone 3.0 acres at 301 New Phoenix Road from AG to C-1 [Map 105, Part of Parcel 019, District 1].

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

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

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

Chairman Sharp closed the Zoning Public Hearing at approximately 7:17 p.m.

Budget Public Hearing

Chairman Sharp opened the Budget Public Hearing at approximately 7:17 p.m.

7. Presentation of Proposed FY26 Budget (staff-CM & Fin)

County Manager Van Haute presented a PowerPoint on the proposed FY26 Budget.

(Copy of presentation made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.) No action taken.

8. Comments from Commissioners and/or Staff

Commissioner Hersey questioned why the library is in the Special Service District and commented that staff did a great job balancing the budget with the least amount of money coming out of the fund balance but was not sure how long that can continue. He advised that expenditures are up 6.3% over last year and that the county needs to find some other way of paying for necessary services, such as impact fees or large increase in fees.

Commissioner Garrett expressed his appreciation for the staff's attempt to balance the budget. He questioned transferring expenses from the General Fund to TSPLOST and asked for clarification on the \$600K road paving money and how it will be accounted for.

Commissioner McElhenney thanked the staff for doing a good job balancing everything and making it work. He also advised that the county needs to find ways to increase revenue.

9. Comments from the Public

Mr. Bill Vargo signed in but declined comments.

Ms. Barb Vargo thanked the staff or what they do and commented on TSPLOST and convenience centers being charged to the Special Service District.

Mr. Billy Webster displayed a chart for general fund revenues and expenditures, explaining that expenditures are exceeding revenue.

Mr. Charles Ray signed in but declined comments.

Chairman Sharp closed the Budget Public Hearing at approximately 7:47 p.m.

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Road Abandonment Public Hearing

Chairman Sharp opened the Road Abandonment Public Hearing at approximately 7:47 p.m.

10. Proposed Abandonment of Joe Wooten Road

No one signed in to speak on this item. No action taken.

11. Proposed Abandonment of Wooten Road

No one signed in to speak on this item. No action taken.

Chairman Sharp closed the Road Abandonment Public Hearing at approximately 7:48 p.m.

Meeting recessed at approximately 7:49 p.m.

Meeting reconvened at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Regular Business Meeting

12. Public Comments

Mr. Bill Vargo questioned a proposed conflict of interest over he and his wife applying for the same committee.

Mr. Pete Crockett commented on the new Publix that is being built and how that is affecting nearby creeks close to his property.

Mr. Don Sadler commented on the Jimmy Davis Park Partnership Advisory Committee.

13. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Minutes - August 1, 2025 Regular Meeting (staff-CC)

b. Approval of Minutes - August 1, 2025 Budget Work Session (staff-CC)

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

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

14. Request for Approval of Bailiff and Juror Compensation Increases for FY26 (COC)

Clerk of Court Trevor Addison explained this request and advised that it had been 39 years since the last juror pay increase and 24 years since the last bailiff pay increase. He advised that the increases were already included in his FY26 budget and that even though the bailiffs are under the Sheriff, but his office pays the expenses.

Motion to approve Bailiff and Juror compensation increases with Bailiff pay going from \$50 to \$75 per day and Juror pay going from \$25 to \$35 per day.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey.

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

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15. Request for Final Plat Subdivision Approval - Cottage Grove at Lake Oconee (staff-P&D)
Planning and Development Director Jackson advised that Technical Review Committee entities have signed off on the final plat and that Planning and Development recommends approval.

Motion to approve Final Plat subdivision for Cottage Grove at Lake Oconee.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

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

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

16. Authorization for Chairman to sign Resolution Calling for an Election to Impose a County Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST 10) (staff-CM/CA)

Ms. Barb Vargo commented on the county extension office and the jail.

Motion to table the Resolution Calling for an Election to Impose a County Special Purposed Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST 10) until the Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Eatonton can be amended.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Chairman Sharp advised that there is no discussion on a motion to table and called for the vote.

Commissioner Hersey questioned the Chairman's ruling.

Attorney Nelson advised that the strict interpretation of Robert's Rules of Order is that a motion to table is to be voted on without discussion, but those rules could be suspended.

Commissioner Hersey requested to waive the rules and allow for at least a minimal debate on why the tabling is in order.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Voting Nay: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Wooten, Chairman Sharp

Motion failed.

Motion to suspend the rules.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey. No second received.

Motion to prohibit the Chairman from signing the Resolution Calling for an Election to Impose a County Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST 10).

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett

Commissioner Hersey advised that he had issues with the resolution, mainly that the estimated costs need to be rounded to the nearest thousand and money should be added for Public Works Roads and Bridges. He further advised that the IGA needed to be amended before getting the amended resolution published in the newspaper and that adding roads and bridges will increase the chances of approval.

Motion to table.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Voting Nay: Commissioner Wooten

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17. Discussion and possible action to end the moratorium on Putnam County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 18 "Public Nuisance Dwellings, Buildings, or Structures" (SH)
Mr. Bill Vargo commented that the moratorium is not needed.

Motion to end the moratorium on Putnam County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 18 "Public Nuisance Dwellings, Buildings, or Structures" effective upon approval.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett

A lengthy discussion followed.

Motion to call the question.

Motion by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten

Voting Yea: Chairman Sharp, Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Wooten

Voting Nay: Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Vote on original motion to end the moratorium.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Voting Nay: Chairman Sharp, Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Wooten

18. Discussion and possible action to request that the County Clerk increase the Short Term Rental application fees to \$700 and to allocate \$300 per application to the Special Service District (SH)

Mr. Bill Vargo commented that he was not in favor of a fee increase.

Ms. Erin Olson commented that the county is not making money off short term rentals, just increasing trash at the recycle centers.

Motion that pursuant to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances, Section 22-124 (i), request that the County Clerk increase the Short Term Rental application fee to \$700.00 and to require the County Manager to allocate \$300.00 per application to the Special Service District.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett

Motion to amend by changing the application fee to \$500.00 with \$250.00 per application being allocated to the Special Service District.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett

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

Vote on motion as amended.

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

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19. Discussion and possible action to schedule the "Development" work session voted by the BOC on April 4, 2025 (RG)

Mr. Charles Gray commented on a recent Georgia Association of Zoning Administrator's conference and the need to keep the Comprehensive Plan updated and reviewed annually. Barb Vargo commented on recent developments and growth in the county, the Comprehensive Plan and rezoning.

Motion to schedule a Development Work Session.

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney

Motion withdrawn by Commissioner Garrett, agreed by Commissioner McElhenney.

No action taken. Clerk Butterworth will email commissioners with possible dates and Chairman Sharp will set a work session date.

Reports/Announcements

20. County Manager Report

No report.

21. County Attorney Report

No report.

22. Commissioner Announcements

Commissioner McElhenney: GAZA does great training, encouraged commissioners to attend some of their events.

Commissioner Garrett: Putnam County Golden Eagle Award Dinner, a scout event, will be Thursday, August 28, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at Barrell 118.

Commissioner Hersey: none

Commissioner Wooten: none

Chairman Sharp: The Georgia Department of Transportation (Georgia DOT) has scheduled a quick response project to improve efficiency and safety on State Route 44 near Lake Oconee. Right-hand passing lanes will be installed on SR 44 southbound at Clack Circle and SR 44 northbound near Lake Oconee Family Fitness. Because this section of SR 44 is a two-lane road without turn lanes, congestion occurs when drivers attempt to make left turns at these locations. Consequently, Georgia DOT has observed drivers using the shoulder to pass on the right. A contractor will install additional pavement and striping at these locations to allow drivers to safely pass on the right.

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Executive Session

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

Chairman Sharp advised that an Executive Session was not needed.

24. Reopen meeting following Executive Session

Executive Session not held.

25. Authorize Chairman to sign Affidavit concerning the subject matter of the closed portion of the meeting

Executive Session not held.

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

Executive Session not held.

Closing

27. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

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

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:54 p.m.

ATTEST:

Lynn Butterworth
County Clerk

B. W. "Bill" Sharp
Chairman

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