

Putnam County Board of Commissioners



117 Putnam Drive, Suite A ♦ Eatonton, GA 31024

Minutes

Friday, August 7, 2026 ♦ 10:00 AM

Putnam County Administration Building – Room 203

Opening

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on Friday, August 7, 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, Interim County Manager Byron Lombard, County Clerk Lynn Butterworth, Deputy County Clerk Mercy Fluker

1. Welcome - Call to Order

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

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

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the Agenda with the removal of items 8,9,10,11, and 17.

Motion made by Tom McElhenney, Seconded by Steve Hersey.

Voting Yea: Tom McElhenney, Richard Garrett, Steve Hersey

Voting Nay: None

Motion Passed

3. Invocation - Brandon Walton, Bible Fellowship Church

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

4. Pledge of Allegiance (TM)

Commissioner McElhenney led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Budget Public Hearing

Chairman Sharp opened the Budget Public Hearing at approximately 10:08 AM.

5. Presentation of Proposed FY27 Budget (staff-CM & Finance)

Finance Director Jennifer Fricks gave a presentation on the Proposed FY27 Budget.

No action was taken.

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

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6. Comments from Commissioners and/or Staff

Commissioners and staff discussed the proposed budget, including the fee system, conservative spending, and steps taken to avoid a millage rate increase.

7. Comments from the Public

Ms. Sandy Decker commented on data center tax incentives and proposed solutions to smart growth.

Ms. Miriam Hatcher explained that she signed up to speak for the wrong item.

Chairman Sharp closed the Budget Public Hearing at approximately 10:42am.

Ordinance Public Hearing

8. Proposed adoption of changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances - Chapter 18 - Section 18-36 (Adoption of technical codes)

Removed from agenda.

9. Proposed adoption of changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances - Chapter 18 - Article IV (Public Nuisance Dwellings, Buildings, or Structures) (Repeal)

Removed from agenda.

10. Proposed adoption of changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances - Chapter 53 - Solar Energy

Removed from agenda.

11. Proposed adoption of changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances - Chapter 66 - Section 66-121 (Expansion of PUD Districts) (New)

Removed from agenda.

Regular Business Meeting

12. Public Comments

Mr. Billy Webster thanked county staff for their help and responsiveness.

Mr. Cass Hatcher distributed a handout, introduced himself as CEO of River Edge Behavioral Health in Macon, Georgia, and explained they are seeking a representative from Putnam County to serve on the board.

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

13. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Minutes - July 21, 2026 Regular Meeting (staff-CC)

b. Approval of Minutes - July 24, 2026 Called Meeting (staff-CC)

c. Approval of Minutes - July 31, 2026 Work Session (staff-CC)

d. Authorization for Chairman to sign ACCG Safety Discount Verification Form (staff-HR)

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion made by Richard Garrett, Seconded by Tom McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Tom McElhenney, Richard Garrett, Steve Hersey

Voting Nay: None

Motion Passed

14. Petition to waive final six-month time interval regarding the Application for Rezoning from the Tempy Sharp Estate at 820 Harmony Road [Map 097, Parcel 033] (staff-CC)

Ms. Heidi King explained the current zoning is not beneficial for future sales and that the end goal is to subdivide the road frontage into smaller parcels based on feedback from potential buyers.

Mr. Tony Clack signed in to speak but passed.

County Manager Lombard explained to the commissioners that the action today would be to waive the final six-months of the prohibition allowing them to apply for rezoning, and that the board is not voting to approve or deny the actual rezoning at this time.

Motion to approve the waiver of the final six-month time limitation that has been established in the zoning regulations that prohibits the rezoning of the same parcel within a twelve-month period for the Tempy Sharp Estate at 820 Harmony Road [Map 097, Parcel 033].

Motion made by Tom McElhenney, Seconded by Richard Garrett.

Voting Yea: Tom McElhenney, Richard Garrett, Steve Hersey

Voting Nay: None

Motion Passed

15. Request for Road Acceptance for Meadowcrest Subdivision - Sage Street, Sage Court, and Sage Lane (staff-PW)
County Manager Lombard explained the developer has checked every box of the process under the current regulations.
Public Works Director Anthony Frazier advised all roads in the subdivision have been paved.

Motion to accept the roads in Meadowcrest Subdivision - Sage Street, Sage Court, and Sage Lane.

Motion made by Steve Hersey, Seconded by Tom McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Tom McElhenney, Richard Garrett, Steve Hersey

Voting Nay: None

Motion Passed

16. Approval of 2026 Budget Amendment #2 (staff-Finance)
Finance Director Jennifer Fricks explained the Budget Amendment.

Motion to Approve 2026 Budget Amendment #2.

Motion made by Richard Garrett, Seconded by Steve Hersey.

Voting Yea: Tom McElhenney, Richard Garrett, Steve Hersey

Voting Nay: None

Motion Passed

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

17. Request for Final Plat Subdivision Approval - Stillwater Lake Oconee-Phase 1 Revision (staff-P&D)
Removed from agenda.

18. Authorization for staff to schedule a Public Hearing on proposed changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances:
a. Chapter 1 (General Provisions)
b. Chapter 28 (Development Regulations)
c. Chapter 46 (Roads, Bridges and Other Public Property)
d. Chapter 66 (Zoning)

Mr. Charles Gray signed in to speak but passed.

County Manager Lombard explained these are proposals and this is the first step in the process before getting public input.
Commissioners and staff agreed to wait to schedule the Public Hearings until the first meeting in September.

Motion to authorize staff to schedule a Public Hearing on the proposed changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances-Chapter 1 (General Provisions), Chapter 28 (Development Regulations), Chapter 46 (Roads, Bridges and Other Public Property), Chapter 66 (Zoning).

Motion made by Richard Garrett, Seconded by Steve Hersey.

Voting Yea: Tom McElhenney, Richard Garrett, Steve Hersey

Voting Nay: None

Motion Passed

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

19. Discussion and possible action to enact a moratorium of up to 12 months on Data Centers, BESS and Solar Farms (SH)
Ms. Jennifer Ray commented in support of a temporary moratorium.
Mr. Charles Gray shared his experience at a presentation on data centers given by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission.
Ms. Miriam Hatcher commented in support of a temporary twelve month moratorium.
Mr. Bill Vargo requested a shorter time-frame for a moratorium.
Ms. Jerri Nowlen commented in support of a twelve month moratorium.
Commissioner Hersey explained a moratorium up to twelve months would allow for time to craft an ordinance which is suitable for Putnam County.
Commissioner Garrett requested to modify the request to a shorter time frame.
County Attorney Nelson confirmed the typical moratorium length in Putnam County has been six months.

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Motion to enact a moratorium for up to 12 months on data centers, battery energy storage systems (BESS), and large solar farms.

Motion by Steve Hersey, Seconded by Tom McElhenney.

Amended motion to enact a moratorium for up to 6 months on data centers and solar farms.

Motion amended by Tom McElhenney, Seconded by Richard Garrett.

Commissioner McElhenney withdrew his amended motion.

Amended motion to enact a moratorium for up to 3 months on data centers, battery energy storage systems (BESS), and solar farms.

Motion amended by Richard Garrett, Seconded by Tom McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Tom McElhenney, Richard Garrett, Bill Sharp

Voting Nay: Steve Hersey

Amended motion passed

County Attorney Nelson brought a proposed moratorium resolution to the board's attention which included definitions for data centers and battery storage centers, since they aren't defined in the Code of Ordinances.

Commissioner Hersey withdrew his original motion as amended, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett. No objection by any board member.

Motion to adopt Resolution Number 2026.8.7 enacting a moratorium on the consideration of, or action on, any land development permit to allow the installation, construction, or establishment of certain uses within Putnam County, Georgia (meaning solar farms, battery storage and data centers) with the moratorium commencing on the adoption of the resolution and extending for three months from today's date and to waive the reading of the resolution.

Motion by Richard Garrett, Seconded by Tom McElhenney.

Commissioner McElhenney called for the question. Commissioner Hersey objected to the call for the question.

Voting Yea: Tom McElhney, Richard Garrett, Bill Sharp

Voting Nay: Steve Hersey

Vote on motion to adopt Resolution 2026.8.7:

Voting Yea: Tom McElhenney, Richard Garrett, Bill Sharp

Voting Nay: Steve Hersey

Motion passed

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

Reports/Announcements

20. County Manager Report

No report.

21. County Attorney Report

No report.

22. Commissioner Announcements

Commissioner McElhenney: advised that he met with Mr. Lynn Busing and County Manager Lombard regarding some architectural standards that would make Putnam County look a whole lot better, starting with a new sign ordinance. He thanked Mr. Busing for his time and willingness to sit down and talk.

Commissioner Garrett: congratulated the cast of Shrek that played at The Plaza and reminded everyone about the great performing arts we have in Putnam County; he advised that a policy for commissioner approval of expenditures for SPLOST and TSPLOST is coming soon; and shared a message from Mr. Charles Trumbo, who appreciates the conversations on data centers and battery storage and this is a good example of listening to the public, transparency, and having an honest and open debate; he further advised that he does not arrive at meetings with a predetermined notion of how he is going to vote.

Commissioner Hersey: no comments

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Chairman Sharp: thanked the people that attending the meeting; also thanked the County Manager for the job he is doing; and gave credit to the County Attorney for keeping everyone straight.

Closing

23. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion made by Tom McElhenney, Seconded by Richard Garrett.

Voting Yea: Tom McElhenney, Richard Garrett, Steve Hersey

Voting Nay: None

Motion Passed

Meeting adjourned at approximately 12:41 PM.

ATTEST:

Lynn Butterworth
County Clerk

B. W. "Bill" Sharp
Chairman