

PUTNAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



117 Putnam Drive, Suite A ♦ Eatonton, GA 31024

Minutes

Friday, December 5, 2025 ♦ 10:00 AM

Putnam County Administration Building – Room 203

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on Friday, December 5, 2025 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

STAFF PRESENT

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

ABSENT

Commissioner Jeff Wooten

STAFF ABSENT

Deputy County Clerk Mercy Fluker

Opening

1. Welcome - Call to Order

Chairman Sharp called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 a.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 Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

Motion amended to postpone agenda item #11 “Authorization for staff to schedule a Public Hearing on proposed changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances - Chapter 2 (Administration)” to the January 2026 meeting

Amended motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Vote on original motion as amended:

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

3. Invocation - Pastor David Wofford, Eatonton First Methodist Church

Pastor David Wofford, Eatonton First Methodist Church, gave the invocation.

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4. Pledge of Allegiance (BS)
Chairman Sharp led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Regular Business Meeting

5. Public Comments

Mr. George Kelecheck submitted a handout and commented on KT (Kepner Tregoe) training.
Mr. Bill Vargo commented on his property tax bill and issues with the Planning & Development department regarding a land disturbance permit.

Ms. Barbara Vargo also commented on issues with the Planning & Development department regarding a land disturbance permit.

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

6. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Minutes - November 18, 2025 Work Session (staff-CC)

b. Approval of Minutes - November 18, 2025 Regular Meeting (staff-CC)

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

7. Discussion and possible action on Increasing Defined Contribution Limits-Presentation by Greg Gease (staff-CM)

County Manager Van Haute explained that Mr. Gease was here to inform the board about how other counties are handling their retirement programs.

Mr. Greg Gease submitted a handout comparing the retirement programs of counties near Putnam. He discussed a possible change in the employer match from 3% to 4% for defined contribution to be competitive in employment, especially for public safety employees. He advised that about 80% of Putnam County employees take advantage of the defined contribution program, although not all at the maximum amount.

County Manager Van Haute recommended increasing the defined contribution employer match to 4%. A resolution will be brought back to the next meeting for approval of this proposed change. No action was taken.

8. Proposed changes to the Putnam County Personnel Manual - Wellness Leave (staff-HR)

Mr. Billy Webster commented on the meaning of personal well-being and inquired about the difference between vacation days and wellness day, why three days, and why they cannot be used in September.

Ms. Barbara Vargo commented that when she worked for the county, she was always told it would cost a lot of tax dollars to take days off and inquired about why this was being done. Human Resources Director Miller talked about mental health statistics and that physical health and mental health are closely related. She advised that investing in the health of employees benefits the county. She explained that providing three wellness days would not increase the budget.

Motion to approve the proposed changes to the Putnam County Personnel Manual - Wellness Leave with the amendment that staff explore a productivity metric that might give us a window into the impact this would have.

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Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Garrett

Voting Nay: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Hersey

Motion failed. No action was taken.

9. Appointments to the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority (staff-CC)

Mr. Bill Sharp and Mr. Brandon Burgess were nominated for appointment to the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority.

Nominations made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea for Bill Sharp: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Chairman Sharp

Voting Nay for Bill Sharp: Commissioner Hersey

Voting Yea for Brandon Burgess: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Bill Sharp and Brandon Burgess were appointed to the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority.

10. Appointments to the Putnam County Department of Family and Children Services Board (staff-CC)

Ms. Meghan Stubbs was nominated for appointment to the Department of Family and Children Services Board.

Nominations made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey.

Voting Yea for Meghan Stubbs: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Ms. Angela Nelson-Williams was nominated for appointment to the Department of Family and Children Services Board.

Nominations made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

Voting Yea for Angela Nelson-Williams: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Ms. Julie Breedlove was nominated for appointment to the Department of Family and Children Services Board.

Nominations made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea for Julie Breedlove: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Ms. Calandra Burke was nominated for appointment to the Department of Family and Children Services Board.

Nominations made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner Hersey.

Voting Yea for Calandra Burke: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Ms. Meghan Stubbs, Ms. Angela Nelson-Williams, Ms. Julie Breedlove, and Ms. Calandra Burke were appointed to the Putnam County Department of Family and Children Services Board.

11. Authorization for staff to schedule a Public Hearing on proposed changes to the Putnam County Code of Ordinances - Chapter 2 (Administration)

Removed from agenda.

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12. Discussion and possible action to oppose any tax exemption for the residential project proposed by Harmony Road GA, LLC

Mr. Fred Jones commented on the number of times this issue has come up and asked the board to vote against tax exemptions for residential projects.

Mr. Bill Vargo commented that tax emptions should only be for industries.

Ms. Barbara Vargo commented on the bond hearing for this project and the need to reconstruct the PDA.

Ms. Erin Olson submitted and reviewed a handout regarding the PDA.

Mr. George Kelecheck commented that he plans to attend the next PDA meeting and the need to hold businesses accountable to their proposals.

Motion to authorize the Chairman to sign the resolution opposing a tax exemption for Harmony Road GA, LLC as shown in the meeting package.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Voting Nay: Chairman Sharp, Commissioner McElhenney

Motion failed. No action was taken.

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

13. Discussion and possible action to dissolve the Putnam Development Authority (SH)

Mr. Bill Vargo commented that the PDA is a controversial group of people and requested that the board establish conflict of interest rules; he supports dissolving the PDA and re-establishing them.

Ms. Barb Vargo commented that the commissioners need to appoint new members to the PDA.

Ms. Erin Olson continued reviewing her handout (from previous item) and requested a forensic audit on the PDA; she also announced that if Commissioner Hersey runs for Chairman of the BOC, she will run for District Three Commissioner.

Mr. George Kelecheck thanked the commissioners for their due diligence and inquired why the City of Eatonton was not included in the Harmony Road GA, LLC MOU.

Motion to authorize the Chairman to sign the resolution requesting the introduction of a local law to repeal the constitutional amendment creating the Putnam County Development Authority as shown in the meeting packet.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Hersey

Voting Nay: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett

Motion failed.

Motion for the BOC to seek a meeting with the PDA in January 2026 to work through issues.

Motion made by Commissioner Garrett, Seconded by Commissioner McElhenney.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Chairman Sharp

Noting Nay: Commissioner Hersey

Reports/Announcements

14. County Manager Report

No report.

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15. County Attorney Report
No report.

16. Commissioner Announcements
Commissioner McElhenney: none
Commissioner Garrett: expressed appreciation for the people who organized the successful food drive mentioned at the last meeting.
Commissioner Hersey: none
Commissioner Wooten: absent
Chairman Sharp: thanked all who attended the Christmas tree lighting last night and reminded all that Jesus is the reason for the season.

Closing

17. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Garrett.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Garrett, Commissioner Hersey

Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.

ATTEST:

Lynn Butterworth
County Clerk

B. W. "Bill" Sharp
Chairman

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