

PUTNAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



117 Putnam Drive, Suite A ♦ Eatonton, GA 31024

Minutes

Friday, August 4, 2023 ♦ 10:00 AM

Putnam County Administration Building – Room 203

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on Friday, August 4, 2023 at approximately 10:00 AM in the Putnam County Administration Building, 117 Putnam Drive, Room 203, Eatonton, Georgia.

PRESENT

Chairman Bill Sharp
Commissioner Gary McElhenney
Commissioner Daniel Brown
Commissioner Jeff Wooten

ABSENT

Commissioner Alan Foster

STAFF PRESENT

County Attorney Tom Watkins
County Manager Paul Van Haute
County Clerk Lynn Butterworth
Deputy Clerk Donna Todd
Finance Director Linda Cook

Opening

1. Welcome - Call to Order

Chairman Sharp called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 a.m. He introduced attorney Tom Watkins from Fleming & Nelson.

(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 Wooten, Seconded by Commissioner Brown.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Wooten

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3. Invocation

Pastor Pete Mattix, Lake Country Baptist Church, gave the invocation.

4. Pledge of Allegiance (JW)

Commissioner Wooten led the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. Special Presentation - Chamber of Commerce Semi-Annual Report

Chamber of Commerce President Maggie Milner gave presentation of semi-annual report.

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

Mill Rate Public Hearing

6. Presentation of Proposed 2023 Mill Rate (staff-CM & Fin)

County Manager Van Haute gave a presentation on the proposed 2023 mill rate.

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

7. Comments from the Public

Mr. Billy Webster congratulated County Manager Van Haute on his recent appointment as Vice-Chair of the Veterans and Military Services Committee by the National Association of Counties (NACo). He also commented that there were no tax increases in the last six years and this year's digest is the largest ever with a 21% increase. He asked why this board can't do what six previous boards have done and not raise taxes. He also distributed a handout showing how the budget could be balanced.

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

8. Comments from Commissioners and/or Staff

Commissioner Wooten commented that he was a lifelong resident and remembers the Rescue Department started in 1974 with Commissioner McElhenney as a founding member. They worked with nothing back then. The recent fatality wreck was horrendous and having experienced people and proper equipment should mean a lot to the community.

Commissioner Brown thanked County Manager Van Haute and Finance Director Linda Cook for their work on the mill rate and budget. He commented that he would like to add \$100K to Putnam General Hospital's budget and include money for the Economic Development Director's salary to the Putnam Development Authority's budget.

Commissioner McElhenney thanked Finance Director Linda Cook and County Manager Van Haute for the presentation.

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Budget Work Session

9. Budget Discussions

Putnam Development Authority Chairman Walt Rocker III requested funding for the PDA to fund the Economic Development Director’s salary.

Clerk of Court Trevor Addison provided a handout of his budget request commenting that it was lower than last year and that he redistributed several line items based on cuts suggested by the County Manger.

Hospital Authority Board Member Tom Thompson expressed concern that the proposed budget doesn't include any increase to Putnam General Hospital. He asked for full funding of their \$900K request.

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

Regular Business Meeting

10. Public Comments

Mr. Michael Ferguson commented in support of short term rentals and a final resolution to the ordinances and moratorium.

Ms. Deb Mallinson commented against short term rentals and expressed her concern for lack of representation in District Three.

Ms. Marilyn Smolinsky commented that short term rentals should be able to bear all associated costs and should be limited.

Mr. Mike Buhler commented against short term rentals and that open and transparent initiatives have disappeared.

Mr. Steven Howard provided several suggestions regarding short term rentals: extend the moratorium; make no changes to the ordinances until District Three is represented; make notes from the secret meetings public by putting on the county website; he is willing to volunteer to serve as interim commissioner for District Three, and he has contacted Governor Kemp and requested an investigation into the circumstances behind Alan Foster's resignation.

Ms. Kathy Wardlaw expressed her concerns about the lack of representation for District Three.

Ms. Ginny Vanoostrum commented on owner’s rights to rent their property long term or short term.

Mr. Peter Crocket commented on recent road construction on Old Phoenix Road and the traffic problems it caused.

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11. Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Minutes - July 18, 2023 Regular Meeting (staff-CC)
- b. Approval of 2023 Alcohol Licenses (staff-CC)
- c. Authorization for Chairman to sign 2023 ACCG Group Health Benefits Program Health Promotion & Wellbeing Grant (staff-HR)

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Wooten
(Copy of documents made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

12. Request from Rick McAllister, Agent for Section E Tract, LLC, for Final Plat Subdivision Approval (staff-P&D)

Mr. Rick McAllister explained and spoke in support of the request.

No one signed in to speak against this item.

Motion to approve the request from Rick McAllister, Agent for Section E Tract, LLC, for Final Plat Subdivision approval.

Motion made by Commissioner Brown, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Wooten
(Copy of plat made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

13. Authorization for Chairman to sign Resolution to name the crossroads at New Phoenix and Old Phoenix Roads to Jones Crossing (GM)

Commissioner McElhenney explained the request to name these crossroads after a prominent Putnam County family.

Motion to authorize the Chairman to sign the Resolution to name the crossroads at New Phoenix and Old Phoenix Roads to Jones Crossing.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Brown.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Wooten
(Copy of resolution made a part of the minutes on minute book page _____.)

Reports/Announcements

14. County Manager Report

No report.

15. County Attorney Report

No report.

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16. Commissioner Announcements
Commissioner McElhenney: none

Commissioner Brown: recognized Mr. Willie Reid for 55 years of driving a school bus.

Commissioner Wooten: thanked everyone who worked on the budget and commented that all county employees are here to serve. He advised that the bad traffic from recent road repaving was unfortunate and uncommon.

Chairman Sharp: also thanked everyone who worked on the budget and thanked Attorney Watkins for filling in for Barry and Adam.

Closing

17. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Wooten

Meeting adjourned at approximately 11:46 a.m.

ATTEST:

Lynn Butterworth
County Clerk

B. W. "Bill" Sharp
Chairman

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