

PUTNAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



117 Putnam Drive, Suite A ♦ Eatonton, GA 31024

Work Session

Minutes

Monday, May 8, 2023 ♦ 9:00 AM

Putnam County Administration Building – Room 204

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met for a Work Session on Monday, May 8, 2023 at approximately 9:00 AM in the Putnam County Administration Building, 117 Putnam Drive, Room 204, Eatonton, Georgia.

PRESENT

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

STAFF PRESENT

County Attorney Adam Nelson
County Manager Paul Van Haute
County Clerk Lynn Butterworth
Planning and Development Director Lisa Jackson
Fire Chief Thomas McClain

Opening

1. Call to Order

Chairman Sharp called the work session to order at approximately 9:00 a.m.
(Copy of agenda made a part of the minutes on minute book page _____.)

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Wooten led the Pledge of Allegiance.

County Attorney Nelson explained the work session rules: the public is not able to sign in to speak, the purpose is to foster discussion among the decision makers, no action will be taken, commissioners will talk amongst themselves and give instructions to staff.

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3. Short Term Rental Discussion

Chairman Sharp advised that the ultimate goal was to rewrite the short term rental ordinances, review the R1R zoning classification, and decide the overall direction of the STR program: grow, limit, eliminate, etc.

Commissioner Wooten commented that short term rentals have grown out of control, growing quicker than the county could control it, that the board needs to look out for the people who have chosen to live here and retire here. He doesn't want to do away with what we have but get enforcement and rules in line before accepting anymore applications, then, in time, open it back up.

Commissioner Foster commented that he is more interested in protecting neighborhoods rather than increasing the financial benefit. He expressed concern for R1R neighborhoods and that we should not allow anymore STRs in R1R areas. He suggested allowing a 3 year period for those that have STRs in R1R neighborhoods to find something else to do with their property. He also presented a letter from an attorney that says the current ordinance does not allow STRs in R1R. He would like to limit the total number of STRs to what we have now. He advised that we should be concerned with maintaining our neighborhoods and community and while it may not be fair to eliminate STRs, there needs to be a limit.

Commissioner Brown commented that on average houses tend to turn over every seven years. He expressed concern with absent owners and wants restrictions and guidelines that hurt. He suggested two strikes and out and that renters need to be screened.

Commissioner McElhenney commented that STRs should not be allowed in neighborhoods, especially R1R neighborhoods. He advised that the county might need a whole department to police STRs (maybe three employees) and that is another cost to consider. He further commented that we need to include the sheriff's recommendations in whatever we do.

Chairman Sharp advised that we received 56 letters from the two special called meetings with 32 in support of STRs and 24 against. He and the board reviewed the large zoning classification maps provided by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission for the R1R areas in each district. He commented that we need to work on the R1R areas and limit STRs overall. He asked the board to consider that enforcement costs money and how we will pay for it.

Commissioner Foster advised that most negative issues are because of the occupancy numbers. He would like to see the limits set at two per bedroom + two overall with a maximum limit of 12, meaning no more than 12 on the property at any time). He would also like to set no events allowed, no parking in the street, no loud amplified music, and a 10pm quiet time.

Commissioner Wooten agreed with Commissioner Foster on the occupancy numbers. He also asked Kathryn Hill from the Health Department, Environmental Health, to talk about septic tank issues.

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Ms. Hill discussed septic tanks and occupancy and explained that her department issues septic permits based off the number of bedrooms. She advised that when septic systems are overtaxed repeatedly, they can't keep up.

The general consensus of the board was to ask the staff to revise the ordinances using the following suggestions:

- Set occupancy limits at two people per bedroom plus two overall, with a maximum of 12 people
- No parking on the street
- Minimum age of renter is 25 years old
- The person who rented the house must be present
- No events allowed beyond the occupancy maximum
- Minimum yearly fire inspections with spot inspections allowed (STR owners will incur costs of inspections – fees to be set by staff)
- Limit the number of STRs allowed in the county
- Allow occupancy for large acreage tracts to be calculated differently from STRs in neighborhoods

Chairman Sharp called for another work session following the June 2, 2023 regular BOC meeting in order to review and fine tune what the staff prepares.

Closing

4. Adjournment

Chairman Sharp adjourned the work session at approximately 10:36 a.m.

ATTEST:

Lynn Butterworth
County Clerk

B. W. "Bill" Sharp
Chairman

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