

COMMISSIONER & COUNCIL MEETING
JOINT SESSION
April 2, 2025
6:30 PM

ATTENDANCE:

COMMISSIONERS:	Rick Woodall, President Tom Helmer, Vice President Andy Beck
ATTORNEY:	Jim Ensley
COUNCIL:	Stephanie Campbell, President Jay Alcorn, Vice President Danny Wallace Wayne Huffman Amanda Brown Kerry Williams
ATTORNEY:	Trudy Selvia
AUDITOR'S OFFICE	Jody Cope
AUDIENCE:	11 Individuals

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners and Council met on April 2, 2025, at 6:30 PM in joint session. The meeting was held at the E911 Center. Woodall opened the meeting. The meeting was held to discuss the annex. To receive projected numbers from budget advisors Baker Tilly and to discuss the bond with legal counsel Ice Miller.

Proposed annex building project

Dale Davis with Envoy discussed the process of the project and Mitch Hannum with Garmong weighed in with additional information; went over basics and concepts they have come up with and the concept that has been chosen (exhibit presented). The issues with land, draining, etc. to ensure permitting goes as expected; refined the chosen concept to accommodate previously discussed changes but still allowing for space for future growth. Currently the estimated cost is 18.6M; the schematic does not include some of the more expensive systems needed and that is what will need to be decided to move forward. (original number was 15M and could still be done but the current design would need to be reworked). The guaranteed max price will be the final price after all things are decided upon.

Another thing to consider is renting out space in annex to bring in funds, eliminating storage spaces currently being used to free up funds, and whether the amount of storage we currently have can be contained in the annex basement.

Mitch Hannum indicated there is a lot of flexibility currently in the design and Dale Davis indicated that they have talked extensively with the individual offices to get their feedback and have incorporated that into the current design.

Andy Beck brought up costs that can be eliminated and Mitch Hannum confirmed the flexibility is there. Beck wanted to know if the cost is less for building without a basement. Dale Davis confirmed it would be but then a retaining wall would need to be built; with one story you would need to extend the building and then there would be drainage issues.

Beck had some concerns about potential additional costs that will be outside of the final number and does not think we need 3 conference rooms; Lisa Lee with Ice Miller and Jason Semler Baker Tilly confirmed that the costs for land/building assessments and other filing fees are included in the overall guaranteed price.

Jason Semler with Baker Tilley: discussed finance options and the charts provided broke the numbers; tax rate increase at year two as well as bigger annual lease payments; entire annual payments does not have to be paid from property taxes if there is other money saved it can be applied to the annual payment; EDIT money could be applied to the annual payment but not EMS funds and public safety funds; general funds could be applied if there is an excess.

Discussed the rates of increase on property taxes over the course of the bond; a 20-year term at 16.5M increases tax bills at \$73 per year; they can put together a formula to determine what the increase would be for any assessed value in the county.

Semler discussed finance options with local banks and other finance underwriters; another option is a competitive bond statement sent out to financial institutions to obtain finance bids.

Opened it up for questions, no comments from the audience.

Jason Semler indicated the financial health of our county is improving and steps taken over the last couple of years have helped substantially.

Question from Trudy Sylvia- with what is going on at State House with property taxes, should we be concerned about that with these projected numbers. Jason Semler does feel that whatever legislation ends up doing it will impact the numbers especially on the county general fund that may be applied to the annual payments; potential reassessment of farmland could impact rates and circuit breaker losses and revenue of county; we will know more before we get to the guaranteed max price.

There is the potential for a referendum process if the amount of the annex is over 19M, this process goes into the ballot at election time for voters to vote on. Any portion of the bond that gets paid by property taxes opens it up to the referendum process. The law does not look at the bond as a county debt – it is viewed as an operating cost.

Lisa Lee (serving as bond counsel for this project) discussed the 6-month process that needs to be started by April 21 to get the ball moving. They would need to find a building to be leased during the construction process.

A three-member building corporation must be created. These would be appointments made by the Board of Commissioners.

Lee said determination of guaranteed max price is key to getting the bond process started; current date is tentatively August 29th and ask that a resolution is adopted to allow bonds to be tax exempt and be able to start lease payments; need a supporting taxpayer petition (50 signatures); no numbers in this petition it is just a description of the process; then to authorize appraisers; the building corporation has to buy the leased land (no debt on the leased land); these procedures need to get started as initial actions to start the process. Petition remonstrance (signature race) is a race for and against the project; does not automatically apply.

Lee said there would be a notice in the paper June 3rd of public hearing for taxpayers to know every financial detail. There would be in total three hearings. A petition of 500 taxpayers will need to file by June 26th for the petition remonstrance to apply; there will be a public hearing on lease itself and will have an objection period, once we get past that no other objection opportunities. Ice Miller will draft all documents that are necessary and provide them to the county attorney, attend all hearings; if property taxes were not a backup to the annual payments, then this process would not be needed.

Wayne Huffman suggested trying to stay at 15M with a leased amount of 13M.

Others suggested reducing the size of the building to less than 23,000 sq feet. Would this impede future growth. Rick Woodall asked if there were any offices that could remain at the courthouse instead of going to the annex. The auditor's office was brought up, but it ties to all the other departments for deed transfers. Also interacts with the Treasurer's office daily. Adult Probation was brought up as well, they are not one of the offices being looked at to transfer to the annex. Dale Davis said the common area could only be cut by a third due to

the design of the building. Discussed the conference rooms as a possible way to reduce square footage.

Beck was adamant about no charging stations for electric vehicles at the annex.

Rick Woodall brought it back to setting a dollar amount while considering the impact on taxpayers – stating the top dollar amount is out. Dale Davis got it down to around 16.8M and that is with variables of equipment and furniture. Woodall asked for each council member and commissioner to give the amount they think should be set:

Wayne Huffman – 15M

Andy Beck – 10M

Tom Helmer – 16M with basement

Danny Wallace – 16M with basement

Amanda Brown – 14M with basement

Jay Alcorn – 16M with basement

Stephanie Campbell – 16M with basement

Phil Gick weighed in: bottom line, an annex is needed. We need to do something with options for future growth while keeping the price down. The conference rooms/meeting spaces need to be adequate.

Need to finalize the dollar amount of annex in the next couple of weeks.

Final item: bridge issue in the county

Commissioners are asking the council to consider making a 5-year commitment to put interest money that currently goes into the county general fund toward the bridges. They will further discuss at the April council meeting. Rick Woodall said the interest in 2024 was 1.2M. They are trying to have 3 to 4M per year to address the problem with bridges.

Stephanie Campbell said she would like Auditor Kristina Berish to confirm the interest could be used for this purpose.

ADJOURN

Rick Woodall made the motion to adjourn. Stephanie Campbell seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Rick Woodall, President

Tom Helmer, Vice President

Andy Beck

Stephanie Campbell, President

Jay Alcorn, Vice President

Danny Wallace

Wayne Huffman

Amanda Brown

Kerry Williams

Attest: Jody Cope, Auditor's Office