Minutes

Board of County Commissioners Regular Meeting
Monday, June 16, 2025 at 4:00 PM
Pender County Public Assembly Room
805 S. Walker Street, Burgaw, NC

PRESENT:	Commissioner Brad George Commissioner Jerry Groves Chairman Randy Burton Vice Chair Brent Springer Commissioner Jimmy T. Tate
ABSENT:	
OTHER PRESENT:	Margaret Blue, Interim County Manager Trey Thurman, County Attorney Lexi Stanfield, Clerk to the Board Allen Vann, Assistant County Manager Other Staff and Members of the Press and Public

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1. CALL TO ORDER

   Chairman Burton called the meeting to order at 4:00PM.

2. INVOCATION

   Chairman Burton gave the invocation.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

   Commissioner George led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

   The Board of Commissioners pulled item 8.10 and moved it to item 9.8 for Approval and Resolutions. Commissioner George requested the Parks and Recreation budget and the Fire budget be split for the remainder of the budget for perceived conflicts of interest. Commissioner George recused himself from the vote for the Parks and Recreation budget and Fire budget. Vice Chairman Springer resigned from the Pender EMS and Fire Board of Directors. Commissioner Tate requested the JCPC budget be split from the original budget for voting. Vice Chairman Springer requested the School's portion of the budget be pulled from the original agenda.

   Vice Chairman Springer made a motion to adopt the agenda with the amendments.
   Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
   The motion carried unanimously.

5. PUBLIC HEARING

5.1	Public Hearing for FY 2025-2026 Budget Ordinance and Fee Schedule	Margaret Blue	4-5

The Board of Commissioners held a public hearing for the proposed 2025-2026 Fiscal Year

Budget.

Miles Bielec spoke about the tourism budget.

6. PUBLIC INFORMATION

6.1	Charities and Non-profits Web Page	Cynthia Tart	6

Cynthia Tart and Brandi Cobb spoke about the new web page on the Pender County website highlighting the charities, non-profits, and other volunteer opportunities within the County. This web page will give citizens easy access to resources and opportunities to assist within the County.

6.2	Novant Heath Pender Medical Center Update	Ruth Glaser	7-12

Ruth Glaser, President of Novant Health Pender Medical Center, provided an update for the Board. Glaser reviewed the Novant Cause and the accomplishments Novant has had with the Pender Medical Center since they bought it. Novant has focused on expanding services to citizens, making improvements to furniture, fixtures, and equipment.

6.3	Update on the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan project	Daniel Adams	13

Daniel Adams, Planning and Community Development Director, provided an update on the Imagine Pender 2050 plan. The second community engagement window is officially closed. There were five meetings held throughout the county. Two constant themes have emerged from these meetings: managing growth and coordinating infrastructure, and protecting rural and agricultural heritage. The Imagine Pender 2050 is working towards those two themes in the Future Land Use Map. Diversifying the tax base has also been taken into consideration in the Imagine Pender 2050 Plan. The next update will come at the July14, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Kay Warwer spoke about Pender Topsail Post and Voice and the Pender EMS and Fire.
Kenny Ramsey spoke about fiscal responsibility.
Rochelle Whiteside spoke about Pender EMS and Fire.
Connie Nelson spoke about Pender EMS and Fire.
Frankie Mae Saunders spoke about Pender EMS and Fire.
Julie Walker spoke about the Noise Ordinance.
Gary Helm spoke about the Noise Ordinance.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner George made a motion to approve the consent agenda with the removal of item 8.10.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

8.1	May 19, 2025, Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting Minutes	Lexi Stanfield	14-20
8.2	Approval of Budget Work Session Meetings Minutes	Lexi Stanfield	21-31

8.3	Approval of a budget ordinance amendment to reimburse Fund 25, Emergency Telephone Fund, from the General Fund for a non-reimbursable expense for $64.50	Margaret Blue	32-33
8.4	Approval of resolution to surplus items for sale on GovDeals.	Margaret Blue	34-35
8.5	Lease Agreements with the State of North Carolina	Allen Vann	36-54
8.6	Approval to budget Sale of Surplus Property revenue to allocate to respective Fund Balances.	Margaret Blue	55-56
8.7	Approval to budget estimated Town Taxes Revenue, Fire District Taxes Revenue, and EMS Taxes Revenue collected for remainder of the fiscal year 2025 to make payments to respective towns, fire districts and EMS.	Margaret Blue	57-62
8.8	Budget Line-Item Transfer and Purchase Order Increase for Kamstrup Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) - Fortiline Purchase Order in the Amount of $300,000.00	Brian Terry	63-67
8.9	Approval of a Budget Ordinance Amendment and related purchase orders to fund year two of the three-year term of the Opioid Settlement Funds Strategic Plan that was approved on March 11, 2024 by the Board of County Commissioners in the amount of $393,688 for FY 25.	Carolyn Moser	68-82
8.10	Approval to Submit an RFP to the Pender Topsail Post and Voice, and the Wilmington StarNews	Brent Springer	83

This item was discussed under Approvals and Resolutions as item 9.1.

Commissioner George questioned whether the Board should approve an RFP (Request for Proposal) or an RFQ (Request for Qualifications). Margaret Blue, Finance Director and Interim County Manager, provided insight on how RFP and RFQ are typically used. The Board discussed the cost associated with Delinquent Tax advertisements. Commissioner Tate raised questions about the cost associated, poor internal communication, and the legality of switching the legal advertisements to the StarNews from the Pender Topsail Post and Voice.

Vice Chairman Springer made a motion to approve the item.

Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
Vice Chairman Springer voted in favor of the motion.
Commissioner Groves voted in favor of the motion.
Chairman Burton voted in opposition of the motion.
Commissioner Tate voted in opposition of the motion.
Commissioner George voted in opposition of the motion.
The motion failed in a 3-2 vote.

9. APPROVALS AND RESOLUTIONS

9.1	Requesting the approval and adoption of the updated Pender County Personnel Policies to be effective 7/1/2025.	Pam Brame	84-295

Pamela Brame, Human Resources Director, presented the item. Brame reviewed the revised areas of the Personnel Policy, which were reviewed by past and current staff, the board, finance, and management. Changes included education assistance, raises for acquired certification and education, reemployment, notice requirements, employee referral bonuses, probationary period extension, bilingual differential pay, and others. Brame reviewed the grievance process with staff members. Brame answered questions from the Board members.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to table the item to the July 14, 2025, Board of Commissioners Meeting.
Commissioner George seconded the motion.
Chairman George voted in favor of the motion.
Commissioner Tate voted in favor of the motion.
Chairman Burton voted in favor of the motion.
Vice Chairman Springer voted in favor of the motion.
Commission Groves voted in opposition of the motion.
The motion carried 4-1.

9.2	Approval of Purchase Order for Transfer Station Repairs and Upgrades by Smith Gardner and associated Capital Project Budget Ordinance and Budget Ordinance Amendment for $725,000.00	Susan Barnhill	296-336

Susan Barnhill, Solid Waste Supervisor, presented the item. Barnhill reported the transfer needs repairs and upgrades. Barnhill introduced Stacey Smith, engineer, to answer any questions. This was budgeted in the prior year budget. The request is to utilize the monies from last year's budget. Barnhill recommended using option one of the three, which will include the additional ramp. Commissioner Tate vocalized his concerns with public outreach. Barnhill and Smith answered questions from the Board regarding sustainability, cost, and other factors.

Commissioner George made a motion to approve option one.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
Chairman Burton voted in favor of the motion.
Commissioner George voted in favor of the motion.
Commissioner Groves voted in favor of the motion.
Commissioner Tate voted in opposition of the motion.
Vice Chairman Springer voted in opposition of the motion.
Motion carried in a 3-2 vote.

9.3	Approval to allocate $725,000 in a project fund utilizing funds already appropriated in the FY25 Budget 072-404500 (Contracted Services) to proceed with installing filtration systems on the five groundwater wells.	Brian Terry	337-356

Brian Terry, Utilities Supervisor, presented the item to the Board. Terry requested the Board approve the allocation of $725,000.00 for the installation of filtration systems that will remove inorganic compounds from the groundwater wells. These filtration systems will enhance the water quality, ease the burden of downstream treatment processes, and save money by reducing the reliance on chemical treatment methods. These funds were budgeted in the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget.

Commissioner George made a motion to approve the item.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

9.4	Approval of Emergency Services Merger Plan	Sarah Fulton	357-409

Sarah Fulton, Assistant to the County Manager, presented the item. Fulton reported the ISO ratings would not see any major changes unless the delivery model changes. Fulton gave an overview of expectations for this project, reporting that mergers can create efficiencies, improve operations, and provide better benefits. The timeline reported is reasonable as long as all parties are actively engaged. Fulton briefly reviewed the timeline with key milestone dates, and the county structure for the new department. Cost options were analyzed; Option A including all fire departments in the County and Option B excluding Rocky Point Volunteer Fire Departments. Meg Blue, Finance Director and Interim County Manager, assisted Fulton in answering questions from the Board. Commissioner Tate and Commissioner George vocalized their concerns about the merger.

Vice Chairman Springer made a motion to approve item 9.4 Option B.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
Chairman Burton voted in favor of the motion.
Vice Chairman Springer voted in favor of the motion.
Commissioner Groves voted in favor of the motion.
Commissioner Tate voted in opposition of the motion.
Commissioner George voted in opposition of the motion.
Motion carried in a 3-2 vote.

9.5	Approval of FY 2025-2026 Budget Ordinance and Fee Schedule	Margaret Blue	410-514

Margaret Blue, Finance Director, and Interim County Manager, presented the proposed budget to the Board for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. Blue reviewed the budget goals and priorities, which include retaining employees and maintaining the current tax rate. The General Fund increased 4.6% and the Enterprise Funds increased 13.5%. Blue showcased the General Fund's revenues from the current year and the proposed budget. Commissioner George vocalized questions regarding remaining revenue neutral and how that impacts the County and citizens a year from now. Blue gave a breakdown of the FY 2025-2026 Ad Valorem Taxes, and its top three functions: Education, Public Safety, and General Government. Blue reviewed the General Fund position changes, which included nine new positions and many reclassifications. Blue ran through the other parts of the budget, General Fund and Enterprise. The Board of Commissioners raised concerns about employee salaries, fleet, additional positions added, the school budget, and more. Margaret Blue and other staff answered questions from the board.

Commissioner Springer made a motion to recess the meeting for fifteen minutes.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.
The Board recessed the meeting from 6:45PM to 7:00PM.

Vice Chairman Sprigner made a motion to approve the budget, excluding the JCPC and Fire and EMS budget portions.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
Chairman Burton voted in favor of the motion.
Vice Chairman Springer voted in opposition of the motion.
Commissioner Tate voted in opposition of the motion.
Commissioner George voted in opposition of the motion.
Commissioner Groves voted in opposition of the motion.
The motion failed in a 4-1 vote.

9.6	Approval of Purchase Order for the purchase of a cybersecurity solution implementing Zero Trust architecture to Ark Technology Consulting for the amount of $48,165.60.	Marcel Miranda	515

Marcel Miranda, ITS Director, presented the item. ncreasing sophistication of cyber threats and to enhance the County's overall cybersecurity posture, staff recommends the purchase of a security solution aligned with Zero Trust Architecture principles. This model operates on the premise of "never trust, always verify," ensuring that access to applications, data, and systems is continuously authenticated, authorized, and monitored regardless of the user's location or device. Miranda answered questions from the Board. These funds are budgeted in the current fiscal year.

Vice Chairman Springer made a motion to approve the item.
Commissioner George seconded the motion.
Chairman Burton voted in favor of the motion.
Vice Chairman Springer voted in favor of the motion.
Commissioner George voted in favor of the motion.
Commissioner Groves voted in favor of the motion.
Commissioner Tate voted in opposition of the motion.
The motion carried in a 4-1 vote.

9.7	Approval to Remove Security Fence from New DHHS Parking Lot	Brent Springer	516

Vice Chairman Springer requested the Board revisit the security fence for the new Health and Human Services Building. The new fence will cost between $40,000.00 and $60,000.00. Assistant County Manager Allen Vann provided insight on the necessity of the fence and reviewed when it was originally approved. Commissioner Springer vocalized issues with the key access being outside the gate and the possibility of the gate breaking. Commissioner George vocalized his support for the security gate and the importance of employee safety.

Vice Chairman Springer made a motion to table item 9.7.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

10. DISCUSSION

10.1 Discuss potential Noise Ordinance updates — Margaret Blue — 517-520

The Board of Commissioners discussed potential amendments to the Noise Ordinance. The Board reviewed the idea of including animals, specifically barking dogs, and utilizing a decibel level maximum. County Attorney Trey Thurman clarified that this is a police power ordinance, and is not enforced in a civil setting. Thurman addressed legal questions from the Board and provided advice.

10.2 Pender County Manager Search — Chairman Burton — 521

Pamela Brame, Human Resources Director, provided an update on the County Manager's Office. Attorney Trey Thurman and Brame reviewed a contract with Developmental Associates to look for applicants. Brame reported there were eighty-one (81) applications received from just the County advertising. Commissioner Tate proposed the idea of allowing the county manager to reside outside the County. Vice Chairman Springer vocalized his desire to keep the manager's residency in the County.

11. APPOINTMENTS

11.1 Appointment(s) to the Veteran's Commission — Michelle Leach — 522-591

Michelle Leach, Veterans' Service Director, presented the candidates to the Board. The Board requested the Veteran's Commission expand to include more seats. The item was tabled until the July 14, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to table the item to the July 14, 2025 Board of Commissioners meeting.
Commissioner George seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

11.2 Appointment(s) to the Pender Housing Initiative — Brianna Martindale — 592-607

Brianna Martindale, Housing Authority Director, presented the candidates to the Board. The Board requested the vacancies continue to be advertised. The item was tabled until the July 14, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to table the item to the July 14, 2025 Board of Commissioners meeting.
Commissioner George seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

11.3 Appointment(s) to the Beautification Committee — Tracy Sholders — 608-623

Tracy Shoulders presented the candidates to the Board. The Board discussed the backgrounds of each applicant and verified there were more vacancies available for appointment. The Board voted to appoint Robert Moore and Jamie Richter to the Beautification Committee. Their terms begin on June 1, 2025, and expire on May 31, 2028.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to appoint Robert Moore.
Vice Chairman Springer seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner George made a motion to appoint Jamie Richter.
Vice Chairman Springer seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

12. MAPLE HILL WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT

13. ROCKY POINT WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT

14. SCOTTS HILL WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT

15. MOORE'S CREEK WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT

16. CENTRAL PENDER WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT

17. PENDER COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

18. SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD

19. ITEMS FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY, COUNTY MANAGER, ASSISTANT COUNTY MANAGER, & COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

County Attorney Trey Thurman recognized Assistant County Manager Allen Vann for his years of dedication. He requested the Board go into closed session for item three (3) Attorney Client and item five (5) Acquisition of Real Property.
Interim County Manager reported she would have a new budget a personnel policy for the Board shortly.
Commissioner Groves provided updates on the Lower Cape Fear Water and Sewer Authority.
Commissioner George thanked Allen Vann for his years of service.
Vice Chairman Springer thanked Allen Vann for his years of service.
Commissioner Tate spoke about water issues, thanked staff, and answered questions.
Chairman Burton thanked Allen Vann and addressed issues with wells.

The Board took a short recess.
Commissioner

20. CLOSED SESSION (IF APPLICABLE)

Vice Chairman Springer made a motion to go into closed session for item three (3) Attorney Client and item five (5) Acquisition of Real Property.
Commissioner George seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chairman Springer made a motion to resume open session.
Commissioner George seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

21. 7PM PUBLIC HEARINGS: SPECIAL USE PERMITS/ZONING MAP AMENDMENTS/RESOLUTIONS

21.1	Approval to Name Roads: Carrie Lee Drive and Bromell Road	Michael Dickson	624-628

Mike Dickson, GIS, presented the item. Staff are requesting the Board rename two roads, Carrie Lee Drive and Bromell Road. The citizens were duly notified of the public hearing per the statutes.Dickson answered questions from the Board.

Commissioner George made a motion to approve.
Vice Chairman Springer seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

21.2	Approval to Name a Road: Paris Pointe	Michael Dickson	629-633

Vice Chairman Springer made a motion to approve item 21.2 21.3, and 21.4.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

21.3	Approval to Name a Road: Solomon Road	Michael Dickson	634-638

Vice Chairman Springer made a motion to approve item 21.2 21.3, and 21.4.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

21.4	Approval to name a road: Bypass Connector	Michael Dickson	639-643

Vice Chairman Springer made a motion to approve item 21.2 21.3, and 21.4.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

22. ADJOURNMENT

[MIN_SIGNATURES]