Minutes

Board of County Commissioners Regular Meeting
Monday, December 1, 2025 at 6:00 PM
Pender County Public Assembly Room
805 S. Walker Street, Burgaw, NC

PRESENT:	Vice Chair Brad George Commissioner Jerry Groves Chairman Randy Burton Commissioner Brent Springer Commissioner Jimmy T. Tate
ABSENT:	
OTHER PRESENT:	Colby Sawyer, County Manager Trey Thurman, County Attorney Other Staff and Members of the Press and Public

1. CALL TO ORDER

   Chairman Burton called the meeting to order at 6:10PM.

2. INVOCATION

   Commissioner Tate led the invocation.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

   Chairman Burton led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

   Commissioner Tate made a motion to approve the agenda.
   Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
   The motion passed.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

5.1 Selection of the Chair — Trey Thurman

Commissioner George nominated Commissioner Tate as Chairman.
Commissioner Tate declined.

Commissioner Groves nominated Commissioner Burton as Chairman.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
Commissioner George voted against.
The motion passed 3 to 1.

5.2 Selection of the Vice Chair — Trey Thurman

Chairman Burton recommended Commissioner Springer as Vice Chair.
There was no second, the motion died.

Commissioner Groves recommended Commissioner George as Vice Chair.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
Commissioner George voted affirmatively.
Chairman Burton voted against.
The motion passed 3 to 1.

5.3 Administration of the Oath of the County Manager — Trey Thurman

Chairman Burton swore in Colby Sawyer as the new County Manager.

* Clerk's Note: Vice Chair Springer arrived at the meeting at 6:11 p.m.

6. PUBLIC HEARING

7. PUBLIC INFORMATION

7.1 Cape Fear Community College presentation — Jim Morton

Jim Morton, President of Cape Fear Community College presented the item. Morton stated there has been an increase in curriculum and students. There are now over 200 programs of study and the college has students from 50 states and 92 counties. It was asked if the number of Pender County students had increased and what the biggest need was. Morton stated the number of students had doubled, and the greatest need was capital improvements.

7.2 WARM presentation — Kim Gore

Kim Gore, Chief Operations Officer for WARM, NC, presented the item. Gore explained the program was a disaster recovery firm to maintain resiliency and safety for those in need. The question was asked about how much money this brought back to the county. Gore stated over 1 million and that 71 homes were involved from Pender County.

7.3 Share the Table presentation — Dawn Ellis

Dawn Ellis, Executive Director for Share the Table, presented the item. Ellis explained the program is expanding access to nutritional foods with healthier options. Their numbers are up 34%. Share the Table has one full time employee and 1 part time employee, the rest are volunteers.

7.4 Green Growth Toolbox Preferred Development Guide — Marcy Waters

Virginia Norris, Senior Long Range Planner, introduced the item and Marcy Waters, Long Range Planner. Waters presented the item and explained that it is a non-regulatory guide for resilient sustainable development, would protect natural habitats, reduce financial risks and change over time. It was asked if this could be included in the Long Range plans. Waters noted that there are 20 policies within the Comprehensive Land Use Plan that can tie these together. The question was asked if these items could be added to the Unified Development Ordinance. Waters stated they could be added. It was noted that if these are not included in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the Unified Development Ordinance it would be hard to make the findings work.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

Rochelle Whiteside spoke about puppet master controlled voting.
Tom Brown spoke about the board not listening to other board members.

Kenny Ramsey spoke about transparency and maintaining appearances.
Frankie Saunders spoke about the tax valuation schedule.
Louis Saunders spoke about threats and speaking of his own free will.
Walter Davies spoke about district voting.
Harry Lewis spoke about water in the county.

Anthony Colon, Public Utilities Director, explained that Pender County does not purchase water from Harrell's. In 2007 there were not enough citizens on Highsmith Road to pay for the cost of the line. The utilities department was asked to look at this again to see if there were sufficient numbers now.

9. CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner George made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

9.1	Approval of Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes for November 3, 2025, and November 17, 2025.	Tracy Sholders
9.2	Approval of Award and Purchase Order for Colliers Engineering and Design for Land Agent Services in the amount of $400,000.00 paid through the State Revolving Fund (SRF) program	Anthony Colon
9.3	Approval of the donation of a tractor and bush hog	Margaret Blue
9.4	Approval of sale of surplus vehicles	Margaret Blue
9.5	Motor Vehicle Releases and Refunds	Jessica Hudson
9.6	Refund/Release Requests for items meeting NC G.S. 105-381	Jessica Hudson

10. APPROVALS AND RESOLUTIONS

10.1 Adoption of the 2026 Schedule of Values — Jessica Hudson

Ryan Vincent, owner of Vincent Valuations, presented the item. Vincent stated they used a market adjustment cost method primarily. They looked at the Pender County market and developed a cost schedule. The company had 55 thousand parcels in the county to evaluate. The question was asked regarding the average number of years' experience the evaluators had. Vincent responded between one (1) and three (3) years, but they are constantly training. Vincent explained they looked at the last two (2) years of true sales in the market and compared like property to like property. A question was asked about how the company would handle the influx of appeals. Vincent stated there are 6–7 people in the county currently for appeals, but they could shift other employees around to assist them if necessary. It was asked how people with limited access to the internet were going to be able to view their evaluations. Vincent said they usually hold meetings to explain the process and the evaluations to the public. It was noted that the Board of Commissioners set the tax rate and that people should not be over taxed. Vincent mentioned programs available to assist certain individuals. It was mentioned that if this was not approved, the process would have to be redone, and it would be difficult to complete in a year in order to meet the statute. The question of lowering tax ad valorem was brought up. Margaret Blue, Finance Director, explained that it could be done, but there had been no change to the tax values since 2019.

Commissioner George made a motion to approve.
There was no second, the motion died.

Towards the end of the meeting, Commissioner Springer requested to return to item 10.1 Schedule of Values and revisit it. There was some deliberation among the Board.

Commissioner George made a motion to approve.
Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.
Chairman Burton and Commissioner Tate voted affirmatively,
Commissioner Groves voted against.
The motion passed 4 to 1.

10.2 Pender County Fire Prevention Code and Ordinances (2025) — Amy Burton

Amy Burton, Fire Marshal, presented the item. Burton explained the document was to update the fire prevention code. It was asked if this would address the amount of egress and ingress required. Burton said yes, it would require two (2) for developments.

Commissioner Groves made a motion for approval.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

10.3 Approval of Budget Amendment and Allocation of Economic Development appropriation to Amazon for site development in the amount of $500,000 in accordance with N.C. G.S. 158-7.1 — Margaret Blue

Margaret Blue, Finance Director, presented the item. Blue stated this was for economic development, the lowering of utilities. This was needed in order for Amazon to move forward with their construction. There was some discussion about how much income Amazon had and would bring to the county.

Commissioner George made a motion to approve.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
Chairman Burton and Commissioner Tate voted in the affirmative.
Commissioner Springer voted against.
The motion passed 4 to 1.

10.4 Request to Allocate $125,000 From the Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund for the Atkinson Regionalization — Anthony Colon

Feasibility Study

Anthony Colon, Public Utilities Director, presented the item. Colon stated this was the first step in the process to see about helping Atkinson with their failing sewer system. Atkinson was asking for $125,000 for the feasibility study and once they received the grant money, they would pay the money back. This was just for the allocation of the money and then there would be discuss about an agreement.

Commissioner Tate made a motion for approval.
Commisioner George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

10.5 Approval of resolution and Budget Amendment for request for funding allocation of $50,000 to Penderlea School's "Leader In Me" Program — Margaret Blue

Commissioner Tate explained the program was for building exceptional leaders at every level. Tate noted that he had talked to other schools and parents already enrolled in the program, and was very impressed with the program.

Commissioner Tate made a motion for approval.
Commissioner George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

10.6 Request for Board Approval of a Resolution Opposing the Town of Fuquay-Varina's Interbasin Transfer (IBT) Request. — James Proctor

James Proctor, Public Utilities Deputy Director, presented the item. Proctor explained that Fuquay-Varina wanted to remove 6.5 million gallons a day from the Cape Fear River and deposit it back into the Neuse River. By not depositing it back into the same river, this will affect many counties south of Fuquay-Varina.

Commissioner George made a motion for approval.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

10.7 Consideration of the Pender County Tax Collector Appointee — Pam Brame

Pam Brame, Human Resources Director, presented the item. Brame explained that, per General Statute 105-349, the board appointed the tax collector and therefore, had to terminate the appointment. Trey Thurman, County Attorney, questioned if the individual had been notified in writing of their right to appear and comment. Brame responded yes. Brame requested to appoint the current Tax Manager as the Tax Collector, who has been performing the job already and is bonded.

Commissioner George made a motion for approval.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

11. DISCUSSION

12. APPOINTMENTS

12.1 Appointment of Commissioners to various Boards — Tracy Sholders

The Board discussed the nomination of Commissioners to various boards. No changes were approved.

13. MAPLE HILL WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT

14. ROCKY POINT WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT

15. SCOTTS HILL WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT

16. MOORE'S CREEK WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT

17. CENTRAL PENDER WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT

18. PENDER COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

18.1 Approval to Write-Off Bad Debt for the Health Department for Calendar Year 2023 in the amount of $10,023.76. — Carolyn Moser

Carolyn Moser, Health Director, presented the item. Moser explained that this figure was for the year 2023 and that if these individuals visited one of the clinics again, the debt would be added back to the books.

Commissioner Groves made a motion to approve.
Commissioner George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

19. SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD

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

Trey Thurman, County Attorney, talked about the signs that had been dropped off. The owners can come get them and if the guy comes to drop off more, call the sheriff and do not accept the signs. Thurman also went over the hiring process for the manager and stated it was the same as always except this time, the County hired a consultant to assist with the process. These types of discussions are never public information as they contain personal information.

Commissioner Groves spoke about the 1.75 million dollars spent on hauling dirt to the new school property on Hwy 210 due to wetlands. Smart Start may be losing its building and the County trying to help locate a building for them. The County needs a plan to get water for everyone and the County is capable of sending out information regarding the county the same way the schools do.

Commissioner George spoke about the vandalism at County parks and creating a resolution for vandalism, cameras at the park, the County Christmas party on December 4th and the blocking of Pansy Lane in Hampstead. Trey Thurman, County Attorney, said he was unaware of any change and would look into it.

Commissioner Tate spoke about looking into internet access for rural areas and the Golden Leaf Foundation Grant was open and should be looked into.

Chairman Burton spoke about receiving a letter from a citizen who wished to help out with the playgrounds. Burton thanked Meg Blue working tirelessly for months as the Interim County Manager and Finance Director. Burton asked if Brantley, Quinton and Thurman could help with the situation on Shaw Hwy.

Commissioner Springer asked about the Noise Ordinance Committee and any consensus. Blue explained that they came up with a similar solution as previously presented but were working on a consensus and hoped to have it in January.

Commissioner George asked that the County look into something like Crime Stoppers for the county.

Commissioner Springer inquired why the agenda for the joint meeting between the school board and the Commissioners was limited. Commissioner George noted that the agenda focused on what they have control over and could work on. Commissioner Springer brought up the 3-tier bus system and the possibility of it expanding throughout the county and addressing that issue. Commissioner George stated that the DMV is inefficient in training bus drivers. The DMV only has two (2) instructors for bus training covering three (3) counties. Blue explained that there had been some confusion about what to put on the agenda, and they could not agree on dates for a meeting that would work for everyone.

Commissioner Burton recessed the meeting for ten (10) minutes at 8.56PM.
Commissioner Burton restarted the meeting at 9:05PM.

21. CLOSED SESSION (IF APPLICABLE)

22. 8PM PUBLIC HEARINGS: SPECIAL USE PERMITS/ZONING MAP AMENDMENTS/RESOLUTIONS

22.1 Petition to Name a Road — Michael Dickson

Mike Dickson, GIS Analyst, presented the item. The petition is to name a road since there are more than three (3) addressable structures on the road.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to approve

Commissioner George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

22.2	REZONE 2025-87: Request to rezone two parcels totaling approximately 27.5 acres from the Residential Performance zoning district to the General Business zoning district in the Topsail Township	Justin Brantley

Justin Brantley, Interim Planning Director, presented the item. Brantley explained that Pender County was requesting the property to be rezoned from Residential Performance (RP) to General Business (GB) like the property beside it. Anthony Colon, Public Utilities Director, explained that Pender Water and Sewer had purchased the property years ago to be used by the new water membrane plant to discharge into the lake from this property. The membrane plant did not go there, and they are trying to rezone in order to sell the property and recoup some of the money lost.

Public Comment:
Kim Roane spoke about how rezoning all the parcels would harm three houses on Dan Owen Drive.
Tammy Balley spoke about halting this until the drainage issues had been resolved on the connecting properties.
Shawn Balley spoke about getting new information tonight, development would cause more flooding and using the property as green space.
Wade Danner spoke (President of Majestic Oaks E Cottages) about potential hazard and litigation issues.

After some discussion amongst the Board regarding the three (3) connecting properties and the drainage issue, it was decided that the County Manager would meet with Mrs. Bailey to see what was going on and see if the County could help.

Commissioner Springer made a motion to approve the first section of the property to be rezoned General Business (GB).
Commissioner George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

22.3	Special Use Permit Case SUP 2025-53: Request for a Special Use Permit to allow for the operation of a used car sales business in the Grady Township.	Madelynn Spencer

Madelynn Spencer, Planner I, presented the item. The special use request was for the maintenance and sale of preowned vehicles. This is permitted by a special use permit in the Rural Agricultural (RA) zoning.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to approve.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion pass unanimously.

22.4	Special Use Permit Case SUP 2025-55: Request for a special use permit to allow for the construction of a 38,046 sq. ft. and associated accessory building church in the Rocky Point Township.	Sean Olds

Sean Olds, Planner I, presented the item. Olds explained the project was for a 38,000 square ft church and a 600 square ft assessor structure.

Commissioner Springer made a motion to approve.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

23. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Groves made a motion to adjourn at 10:10PM.
Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]