Minutes

Board of County Commissioners Regular Meeting
Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 6:00 PM
Pender County Hampstead Annex
15060 Hwy 17, Hampstead, NC 28443

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
Meg Blue, Assistant County Manager
Trey Thurman, County Attorney
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 6:00pm.

2. INVOCATION

Chairman Burton led the invocation.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Springer led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner Springer made a motion to approve the agenda with the removal of item 21.1, Rezone 2025-86.
Vice Chair George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

5. PUBLIC HEARING

6. PUBLIC INFORMATION

6.1 How to Stay Informed in Pender County — Sarah Fulton, Brandi Cobb

Sarah Fulton, Strategic Director, and Brandi Cobb, Communications Manager, presented the item. The ways to stay up to date on what is going on in Pender County were discussed.

6.2 Update on Capital Projects — Nick West

Nick West, Project Manager, presented the item. West gave an update on the four current capital projects, Health and Human Services (HHS), Central Pender Park, Law Enforcement

Center, and the Hampstead Library.

West explained that the HHS building was a 60,000 square foot, two (2) story building. The project started 9/13/2024 and is expected to be completed by 4/6/2026 at a total cost of $49,587,322.90 including change orders.

West noted that Central Pender Park started on 12/10/2024 and is expected to be completed 1/23/2026 without a septic system. The soil is unsuitable for a septic system, so the engineer is redesigning the plan, at no cost, for a forced main sewer system. The total project cost with all change orders is currently $3,798,411.13.

West stated the Law Enforcement Center started 7/15/2024 and is expected to be completed 10/12/2026. The project total, with change orders, is currently $56,037,516.65.

West noted that the Hampstead Library is looking to start in February 2026 with an estimated completion date in the Spring of 2027. The estimated budget is $10,820.760.

Commissioner Springer questioned who was going to pay for the gym at the Law Enforcement Center and the HSS Building. Commissioner Burton questioned who initiated all the change orders for Central Pender Park. West explained the numerous change orders, the cause as well as the cost associated with them. Commissioner Springer inquired how much the sewer would cost. West stated that the new design was needed in order to achieve the cost. Commissioner Tate questioned who oversaw the project, with West explaining that Pond Co. did the design. Commissioner Tate responded that the engineer should be responsible for all costs associated with the sewer. Commissioner Springer questioned who told the county to move the transformer. West responded that 4-County was not going to take responsibility for it as they would have to drive over sidewalks and sewer lines to service it. West noted that Pond was to redesign all phases of the park for sewer. Commissioner Tate asked if this had been referred to legal to review, West replied yes.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jennifer Hornacek spoke about Canetuck waste location.
Max Beckwith spoke about county growth solutions.
Melissa Williams spoke about an animal welfare ordinance.
Liz Piacenza spoke about Hampstead Library.
Bob Morgan spoke about Paragon Building Corp. bid for the Hampstead Library.
Walter Davis spoke about redistricting.
Adiranne Harrington spoke about the Roadway Safety Action Plan.
Diane Veneziale spoke about a splash pad at Kiwanis Park.
Beth Butler spoke about the re-use of the old Kiwanis Park equipment.
Sarah Nutt spoke about the petition for a splash pad at Kiwanis Park.
Jules Gossett spoke about a splash pad at Kiwanis Park.
April Altiere spoke about the annexation by Holly Ridge.
Jim Harris spoke about redistricting.
Dorothy Royal spoke about the annexation by Holly Ridge.
Charles Schoonmaker spoke about Maple Hill Voluntary Fire Department.
Natalie Standard spoke about clear-cutting.
Joe Cina spoke about redistricting.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Tate made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda with the pulling of item 8.3.
Vice Chair George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

8.1	Approval of a sole source Purchase Order for Cellebrite renewal fee in the amount of $21,700.00.	Alan Cutler
8.2	Approval of a Budget Ordinance Amendment to Increase Holly Shelter Shooting Range Revenue and Expenditures by $3,321.00	Zach White
8.3	Approval of Budget Ordinance Amendment to Close Two Projects and Reallocate Budget to Central Pender Park Project	Margaret Blue

Commissioner Springer stated he had spoken with Court House staff and the roof was leaking and was not previously taken care of. Springer questioned if this could be taken care of prior to reapplying the money. Meg Blue, Assistant County Manager, stated it could and that the money could come out of the maintenance budget. Commissioner Springer asked for an update with Blue stating she could update later in the evening. Commissioner Tate inquired if the Wi-Fi issue had been resolved and Blue responded it had been.

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

8.4	Approval of EMS Billing Services Contract with EMS Management & Consultants	Sarah Fulton
8.5	Approval of updated authorized check signers for respective bank accounts	Margaret Blue
8.6	Approval of the Revised 2026 Holiday Schedule	Kimberly Wickline-Bennett

9. APPROVALS AND RESOLUTIONS

9.1	Proclamation Declaring February 27, 2026, as Moores Creek Bridge Day	Tracy Sholders

Commissioner Burton read the proclamation regarding Moores Creek Bridge Day.

9.2	Approval of the Senior Community Service Employment Program	Colby Sawyer

Colby Sawyer, County Manager, introduced Steve Moore of the Senior Community Service

Employment Program (SCSEP). Moore advised that the program was federally funded and serves five (5) surrounding counties. There are three (3) requirements to enter the program: you must be over 55, unemployed and have a household income within 125% of the poverty level.

Commissioner Springer made a motion to approve.
Vice Chair George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

9.3	Approval of Budget Ordinance Amendment and Purchase Order for Physical Security Installation and Licensing at Hampstead Kiwanis Park	Marcel Miranda, Zach White

Zach White, Parks & Recreation Director, presented the item. White stated he had a meeting with the Kiwanis Park Inc. board. He noted the board supports the project, but their current funding is tied to other projects. White stated the board did offer to raise funds to assist with the cost. Chairman Burton inquired what the recent damage cost. White replied it was currently around $4,000, without labor included. Commissioner Springer inquired about the status of the contract with Kiwanis Park. Quinton Mogan, Staff Attorney, responded that there were some issues being worked out.

Vice Chair George made a motion to approve.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
Commissioner Springer apposed.
The motion passed 4 to 1.

9.4	Approval of the Hampstead Library Project Ordinance, Budget Amendment, and Construction Contract	Nick West

Nick West, Project Manager, presented the item. West introduced John Sawyer, with Sawyer Sherwood and Associates. Sawyer explained that 21 contractors had looked at the project, 7 bids were obtained, and the lowest bid was chosen. Vice Chair George asked how the bid with N/A affected the bid package. Quinton Morgan, Staff Attorney, explained that the county has a bid process and each line required a defined price and this particular contractor placed an N/A in block 10. Sawyer explained that borings were done on the property. The report said to get individual prices for replacing the soil. Option 10 used geotech fabric and to be competitive, a cost needed to be provided for all units per specs. Trey Thurman, County Attorney, stated that, due to the size of the project, the state said to use the bid method. Commissioner Tate questioned if a projection had been done for the facility. Allen Bell, Library Director, replied yes, he had projected 30 to 35 years. Commissioner Tate questioned where the contract was and had it been seen by legal authorities. Morgan stated he had not seen it.

Commissioner Springer made a motion to table the item for the 2/2 meeting in order for legal to review the contract.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
Commissioner Groves voted against.
The motion passed 4 to 1.

9.5	Approval of contract amendment and increase of associated purchase order for additional undercutting for the new LEC	Nick West

Nick West, Project Manager, explained the item was for additional undercutting of soils on the access road to Penderlea to the rear of the new Law Enforcement Center. West introduced

John Schultheis, with Daniels and Daniels. Schultheis stated a geotech report was done and ECS never bored the road to Penderlea. An additional 800–900 ft of undercutting was needed to finish the road. Commissioner Springer asked if the soil being removed could be used as a berm for a firing range. Schultheis said yes. Commissioner Burton inquired if the project was on budget. Meg Blue, Assistant Manager, replied yes, the road bid was an alternate and that the money was in the budget. This was to increase the purchase order to $111,219.91. Commissioner Tate questioned why this was not included in the original contract. Blue replied it was an alternate bid and was not in the original geotech quote. Commissioner Tate asked if contracts were being reviewed in order to reduce the number of change orders processed. Colby Sawyer, County Manager, replied that each department in the county will be reviewing all contracts going forward.

Vice Chair George made a motion to approve.
Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

9.6 Resolution for the Redistricting of Pender County Commissioner Districts — Colby Sawyer

Colby Sawyer, County Manager, presented the item. Sawyer explained that the item was brought to the board due to a request from Commissioner Springer. Sawyer stated that Pender County currently used at large voting and this presentation was to look at updating district lines. This update would support transparency, keep geographic representations credible and prepares the county if the election method changes in the future.

Commissioner Springer asked if there was limited legal exposure. County Attorney, Trey Thurman, stated yes but not much. Since the last change went to the General Assembly for approval, this one would too. After much discussion among the commissioners, it was asked to table the item.

Commissioner Groves made a motion to table the item for the February 2, 2026, meeting.
Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.
Chairman Burton voted in approval.
Commissioners Tate and George voted in opposition.
The motion passed 3 to 2.

10. DISCUSSION

11. APPOINTMENTS

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

Trey Thurman, County Attorney, requested the Board go into closed session for item three (3) Attorney Client Privilege, item four (4) Economic Development and item five (5) Acquisition of Real Property.

Quinton Morgan advised he would be bringing Old Swann Point Road to the February 2, 2026, meeting. Commissioner Groves asked Quinton to find out the court's decision on this.

Colby Sawyer congratulated the Health Department on their Leadership Pender program. Sawyer mentioned that 1/31/26 was national hot chocolate day and Parks and Rec would be handing out hot chocolate at the end of a walk in the Abbey Reserve starting at 10 am. Sawyer asked everyone to pay attention to the upcoming weather. Sawyer also mentioned the next Board of Adjustment meeting on 1/21/26, the Board meeting in Burgaw on February 2, 2026, and the upcoming elections.

Commissioner Groves stated it was primary season.

Vice Chair George stated there would be a resolution at the next board meeting regarding Chemours.

Commissioner Springer asked if negotiations were done as part of contracts. Sawyer replied not on sealed bids. Commissioner Springer questioned if change orders were negotiated. Meg Blue, Assistant County Manager, replied yes, especially in the last six (6) months. Sawyer replied that some change orders were denied or advised to reduce the price. Commissioner Springer asked if Sawyer had stopped the stop work order. Sawyer stated yes, as he had an agreement with the contractor that no certificates of occupancy would be issued until the issue was resolved. The contractor had made progress and was providing weekly updates. Sawyer said he would reissue the stop work order if necessary. Commissioner Tate stated the county needed to work on the homeowners road where firetrucks could not access her home due to construction. Tate suggested there were errors on the Planning Board's side, and it needed to be revisited. Commissioner Burton asked if it could be revisited in the am.

Commissioner Tate spoke about the Montague trash site and said that the Canetuck location needed to change its hours to help residents. Tate also noted that he wanted an answer from Raleigh on the new land. Meg Blue, Assistant County Manager, stated there could be no impervious surface, so it was resubmitted with gravel. The problem was that the property was a

FEMA buyout.

Chairman Burton stated Pansy Lane needed to be opened back up due to the amount of traffic in Hampstead. Burton mentioned the Board of Adjustments meeting regarding Shaw Highway residents was on January 21, 2026. Burton asked Sarah Fulton, Strategic Director, to call Chief Motley with the Maple Hill Fire Department and work on a resolution to the merger. Burton offered his condolences to the family involved in the wreck on Hwy 53 that morning, requested more information on the Holly Ridge annexation, and will work on the tax rate so not to raise property taxes.

20. CLOSED SESSION (IF APPLICABLE)

Vice Chair George made a motion to go into closed session at 10:14pm.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Groves made a motion to end closed session at 10:51pm.
Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

21. 8PM PUBLIC HEARINGS: SPECIAL USE PERMITS/ZONING MAP AMENDMENTS/RESOLUTIONS

21.1 REZONE 2025-86: Rezoning request for the change of use in an existing commercial building, that is approximately 3,500 sq ft, for the purpose of operating a business that cuts and polishes granite for countertop installation as well as to support other potential trade contractor uses. — Justin Brantley

Justin Brantley, Interium Planning Director, advised that case had been withdrawn.

21.2 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 stated the case was brought to the Board at the December 2025 meeting but was being brought back due to an incorrect address. Commissonier Tate inquired how much parking was available. Andrew Isenhour, with Blue Water Engineering, responded with 196-245. Commissioner Tate questioned if a traffic study was completed. Isenhour stated one would need to be completed.

Public Comment:

Renea Jones spoke about the traffic concerns for the area.

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

21.3 ZTA 2025-32: Zoning Text Amendment to Update the definition of Family Child Care Home — Virginia Norris

Virginia Norris, Senior Long Range Planner, presented the item. Norris explained the amendment was due to state regulations and that the Planning Board had approved it in December. The amendment would change the number of children allowed in a home daycare from 8 to 10.

Commissioner Springer made a motion to approve.
Vice Chair George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

21.4 ZTA 2025-33: Zoning Text Amendment to update UDO for waiting periods for refiling rezoning applications — Virginia Norris

Virginia Norris, Senior Long Range Planner, presented the item. Norris explained the amendment was due to state regulations and that the Planning Board had approved it in December. The amendment would eliminate the mandatory waiting period for re-submittals.

Commissioner Springer made a motion to approve.
Vice Chair George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

22. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Groves made a motion to adjourn at 10:52pm.
Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]