



Minutes

Board of County Commissioners Regular Meeting
Monday, January 5, 2026 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
Meg Blue, Assistant 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 6:00 pm.

2. INVOCATION

Commissioner Tate led the Invocation.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Springer led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner Springer made a motion to waive the rules to add a resolution and approve the agenda.

Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Burton read the Resolution honoring the life and service of Stephen Carroll "Steve" Holland.

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.

Commissioner Tate inquired how this information was going to be made available to the rural areas of the county. Fulton stated the Strategic Plan was going to identify where and how to do this. Commissioner Tate suggested that Public Service Organizations as well as churches be contacted to assist in the delivery of the information.

6.2 Pender County Extension - Expanded Foods and Nutrition Program (EFNEP) Update

Cindy
Rivenbark

Cindy Rivenbark, EFNEP Program Assistant, presented the item. Rivenbark explained that EFNEP is the nation's first Nutritional Education program for low-income families. Rivenbark has taught the program in a number of schools and other locations. In order to graduate from the program, the participants must attend at least six (6) thirty-minute lessons.

6.3 Managers update on the ACH fraud incident.

Colby Sawyer

Colby Sawyer, County Manager, presented the item. Sawyer went over the timeline leading up to the discovery, and the steps taken afterward. The FBI, SBI, Sheriffs, banks and insurance companies were involved in the investigation.

Meg Blue, Assistant County Manager, went over the finance department's previous approval process and how it had been enhanced since this incident. There are now 3 sets of approvals before a change can be made, or an item paid for. Blue did note that no tax dollars were involved in the incident.

Commissioner Tate noted the county was audited yearly and inquired if they looked for internal weaknesses during the audit. Blue responded yes, and the county has an outside audit also.

Commissioner Springer questioned how much money the county pays to the Lower Cape Fear Water and Sewer Authority annually. Sawyer responded, about \$30,000 per month, not including the large payments from a previous agreement. Springer inquired how long the county had been paying LCFWS and that county needed a solution to stop purchasing water from other sources. Springer inquired how old the Munis software the county uses was. Blue said the county had been using it since 1999. Marcel Miranda, IT Director, stated that the county was in the last build of Munis that was offered.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Cindy Moore thanked all who met with Maple Hill and helped to work on their problems. Michael Willmin spoke on a dead end road being used as a dumping ground. Joshua Patti stated he is the NC State House District 16 representative. Frankie Saunders spoke about sending informational flyers in the mail.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Tate requested the pulling of items 8.2 and 8.3 from the agenda for discussion.

Commissioner Springer made a motion to approve the consent agenda with the pulling of items 8.2 and 8.3.

Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

8.1	Approval to declare the intent to list surplus property obtained in a tax foreclosure sale for Parcel ID #2353-74-5812-0000	Margaret Blue
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8.2	Approval of Budget Ordinance Amendment to Close Two Projects and Reallocate Budget to Central Pender Park Project	Margaret Blue
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Commissioner Tate stated he had visited the park and wanted to know if it was on schedule for completion. Colby Sawyer, County Manager, stated the park would be ready by the end of January except for the sewer connection. It was suggested that the park could open with some form of commercial restrooms until the sewer is connected. Commissioner Tate asked what the issues were with the project. Zach White, Parks & Recreation Director, replied there were weather delays and property issues. Commissioner Tate inquired if topography studies had been completed. Sawyer replied, yes, but the engineering firm designed the system, and it would not work. The engineer has agreed to re-design the system at no cost to the county. Due to further discussion needed, the item was moved to the next meeting on January 20, 2026.

8.3	Approval of Budget Ordinance Amendment to Budget Additional DHHS Building Revenues	Margaret Blue
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Commissioner Tate questioned if the project was on budget, why move it. Meg Blue, Assistant County Manager, explained that the project was on budget and ahead of schedule and this was to add sales tax and interest back to the project. Commissioner Tate asked what any leftover money would be used for, with Blue responding that it would be used to pay down the dept for this project.

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

8.4	Approval of Budget Ordinance Amendment to Carry Forward Remaining Budget for WWTP Berm Project	Margaret Blue
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8.5	Approval of Budget Ordinance Amendment to Budget Remaining Lottery Repair and Renovation (R&R) Funds for reimbursement to Pender County Schools	Margaret Blue
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8.6	Approval of Budget Ordinance Amendment to Budget Year Two Opioid Settlement Funds for Pender County Sheriff's Office DARE Program	Margaret Blue
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8.7	Refund/Release Requests for items meeting NC G.S. 105-381	Jessica Hudson
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8.8	Motor Vehicle Releases and Refunds	Jessica Hudson
8.9	Approval of Purchase Order to CDW-G for data network equipment for the new Health and Human Services Building	Nick West
8.10	Approval of Board of Commissioners Special meeting minutes from 11/25/2025 and the Board of Commissioners Regular meeting minutes from 12/1/25	Tracy Sholders
8.11	Approval to Accept Bid and Initiate Upset Bid Process for Parcel ID #4302-65-9738-0000	Margaret Blue
8.12	Approval of Purchase Orders for Timekeeping Software Implementation and Annual Licensing	Marcel Miranda

9. APPROVALS AND RESOLUTIONS

9.1	Approval of the transfer of Right of Way, Temporary Construction Easements, and Improvements to NCDOT	Sarah Fulton
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Sarah Fulton, Strategic Director, presented the item. Fulton introduced Trevor Carol, DOT Engineer, and Ben Socks, ROW Manager. Project R5701 is intended to widen the intersection at Walker Street and Wilmington Street. Commissioner Tate inquired if the property was of historical significance. Carol replied that the property had been vetted. Commissioner Springer inquired if the new Town of Burgaw sign at the corner would be disturbed. Carol stated the sign was marked on the plans and would not be disturbed. Commissioner Springer asked what type of curbing was going to be used. Carol replied it would be the stand-up curbing.

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

9.2	Approval for the addition of Chief Range Safety Officer position to the Pay & Classification Plan for February 1, 2026 implementation	Zach White
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Zach White introduced the item. The position is for a Chief Range Safety Officer to start February 1, 2026. NC Wildlife is going to pay 75% of the position and the county will cover the remaining 25%. Currently, the shooting range is earning enough money to cover its expenses.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to approve.
Vice Chair George seconded the motion.
Chairman Burton and Commissioner Groves voted affirmatively.

Commissioner Springer voted in opposition.
The motion passed 4 to 1.

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

Marcel Miranda, IT Director, and Zach White, Parks & Recreation Director, presented the item. Commissioner Burton inquired if there would be signs posted about being recorded. White confirmed there would be. Commissioner Springer inquired if there were cameras figured into the New Central Pender Park. White said yes, once the park was open. Commissioner Springer asked what portion Kiwanis was going to be responsible for paying. White said he had a meeting with them later in the week and hoped to get further details on that. It was decided to table the item until the January 20, 2026, meeting, in order to gather more information.

Commissioner Springer made a motion to table the item until the January 20, 2026 meeting. Commissioner Groves seconded.

Chairman Burton and Commissioner Tate voted affirmatively.

Vice Chair George voted in opposition.

The motion passed 4 to 1.

10. DISCUSSION

11. APPOINTMENTS

11.1 Appointment to the Planning Board Tracy Sholders

Tracy Sholders, Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, presented the item. Sholders listed the number of openings and went over the applicants. The Commissioners discussed the numerous applicants amongst themselves.

Vice Chairman George made a motion to approve Ashley Morrison, Robert Gallagher, John Coleman and Delva Jordan.

Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.

Chairman Burton and Commissioner Groves voted affirmatively.

Commissioner Springer voted in opposition.

The motion passed 4 to 1.

11.2 Appointment to the Library Board Tracy Sholders

Tracy Sholders, Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, presented the item. Sholders listed the number of openings and read over the applicant.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to approve Martha Highsmith.

Vice Chairman George seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

11.3 Appointment to the Fire Commission Tracy Sholders

Tracy Sholders, Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, presented the item. Sholders listed the number of openings and read over the applicants.

Vice Chairman George made a motion to approve Steve Amriott.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

11.4 Appointment to the Board of Adjustments Tracy Sholders

Tracy Sholders, Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, presented the item. Sholders listed the number of openings and read over the applicants.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to approve Nick Zdanowicz, Jeffrey Snider, and Max Kipfer. Commissioner Springer seconded the motion. Vice Chairman George and Commissioner Groves voted affirmatively. The motion passed 4 to 4.

Clerks note: Chairman Burton had stepped away at this vote.

11.5	Appointment to the Voluntary Agricultural District Board	Tracy Sholders
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Tracy Sholders, Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, presented the item. Sholders listed the number of openings and read over the applicant.

Vice Chair George made a motion to approve Gina Marasco.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

11.6	Appointment to the Tourism Development Authority	Tracy Sholders
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Tracy Sholders, Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, presented the item. Sholders listed the number of openings and read over the applicants.

Vice Chairman George made a motion to approve Beth Gardner, Mike Harrington and Dewey White.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

Vice Chairman George made a motion to extend Matthew Woods term for one (1) year.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

11.7	Appointment to the Parks & Recreation Board	Tracy Sholders
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Tracy Sholders, Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, presented the item. Sholders listed the number of openings and read over the applicants.

Vice Chairman George made a motion to approve Chris Gerlich.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

11.8	Appointment to the Pender County Nursing/Adult Care Homes Advisory Committee.	Tracy Sholders
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Tracy Sholders, Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, presented the item. Sholders listed the

Commissioner Tate made a motion to approve Kevin Sanderson and Denise Smith.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Groves made a motion to approve Amy Burton.
Vice Chair George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

- Trey Thurman, County Attorney, requested the Board go into closed session for item three (3) Attorney Client Privilege, item six (6) Personnel and item seven (7) Respond to alleged misconduct.

Colby Sawyer, County Manger, spoke about the meeting regarding Fuquay Varina, he requested them to hold public hearings in the areas affected by this. Colby spoke about

personal tax listings by 2/2/26, early voting 1/12/26, the bridge on Hwy 53 being closed for repairs, cold/flu season, the 1/6/26 Planning Board meeting, the county being closed 1/19/26, the 1/20/26 BOCC meeting and the items Trey mentioned for closed session.

Commissioner Groves also attended the Fuquay Varina meeting, appreciated the information about the audit and where and what the money was used for.

Vice Chairman George spoke about a resident being killed at the entrance to Pelican Reef and the traffic in that area. He mentioned an update meeting regarding the light at that location that would be held at the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WMPO) on 1/28/26 at 3pm. He asked for attendance at the meetings to help make Pender County's issues known.

Commissioner Tate spoke about the staff looking into a Montague dump site, and asked what locations Christmas trees and tires could be dropped off. He noted the service should be restored, or the fees reduced due to no Montague waste site. He attended the Surf City Share the Table dolphin dip.

Chairman Burton noted there was a violent epidemic of super respiratory issues, the re-evaluation notices are to go out in February, and he would work hard to keep taxes low. He asked that the Military be kept in everyone's prayers.

20. CLOSED SESSION (IF APPLICABLE)

Commissioner Groves made a motion to go into closed session at 8:34 pm.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Groves made a motion to end closed session at 9:21 pm.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
The motion carried unanimously.

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

22. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chairman George made a motion to adjourn.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]