Minutes

Board of County Commissioners Regular Meeting
Monday, May 4, 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 Katie Barber-Jones, Hartzog Law Group Other Staff and Members of the Press and Public

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1. CALL TO ORDER

   Vice Chairman George called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

2. INVOCATION

   Commissioner Tate led the Invocation.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

   Vice Chairman George led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

   * Clerks Note - Chairman Burton was stuck in traffic.

   Commissioner Tate requested item 9.7 be moved to the top of the Approvals and Resolutions section.

   Commissioner Springer made a motion to adopt the agenda with the movement of item 9.7 to the top of Approvals and Resolutions.
   Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
   The motion passed unanimously.

   Commissioner Springer made a motion to excuse Chairman Burton until his arrival.
   Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
   The motion passed unanimously.

5. PUBLIC HEARING

6. PUBLIC INFORMATION

6.1 Pender Sheriff's Charitable Foundation update and information on the Denim & Diamonds Annual Auction and Dinner — Cynthia Tart

Cynthia Tart, President of the Sheriff's Charitable Foundation, presented the item. Tart explained that this year they were raising funds for the lifesaver program for tracking bracelets. The program was started in 2023 and has raised over $100,000 for the sheriff's office.

6.2 Update on the Emergency Services Merger — Sarah Fulton

Sarah Fulton, Strategic Director, introduced Chief Grayson. Chief Grayson provided an update on the Pender EMS & Fire merger. The merger date is still scheduled for July 5, 2026. The project consists of 14 topic areas with numerous tasks under each. Over 93% of the tasks are complete or in progress for completion. There will be some tasks that will not be completed until after the merger. Chief Grayson stated there would be no service interruptions.

Commissioner George asked about the operational cost. Sarah Fulton, Strategic Director, responded 3 million. Commissioner George questioned the debt savings and Fulton replied 1.2 million. Chairman Burton inquired how many new employees would be added. Fulton responded 250.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Regina Fennell spoke on mobile home misclassifications on taxes.
Debbie Walker spoke about water.
Cheryl Highsmith spoke about water.
Yvonne Brathwaite spoke about water.
Frankie Saunders spoke about taxes.
Louis Saunders spoke about tax assessments.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Groves made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda with the pulling of items 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, and 8.7 for discussion.
Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

8.1 Approval of Budget Ordinance Amendment for Variance to Abbey Nature Preserve Project in the amount of $31,869 — Zach White

Vice Chairman George felt Pender County was too lax in their tree policy. Commissioner Springer asked the manager to come up with a policy due to the age of the tree, it could not be removed. Chairman Burton requested the Unified Development Ordinance be looked at also to see what could be done.

8.2 Approval of Purchase Order for Tactical Body Armor from Atlantic Tactical in the amount of $55,882.81 — Alan Cutler

8.3 Motor Vehicle Releases and Refunds — Jessica Hudson

8.4 Approval of Purchase Order for two Ford F150 XL trucks budgeted in FY 2026 for Pender County Utilities Water Operations for total cost of $83,160.42 — James Proctor

James Proctor, Interim Utilities Director, presented the item. This was for new vehicles for new employees in the budget that he has been unable to hire because there were no vehicles for them to drive.

8.5	Approval of Purchase Order for a Chevrolet Equinox for Utilities Lab Operations at a cost of $28,795.00	James Proctor

James Proctor, Interim Utilities Director, presented the item. This was for a new vehicle for the lab employees to drive back and forth. They are currently driving their own vehicles. Chairman Burton asked for them to find loaner vehicles in the meantime for them to use.

8.6	Approval of a Purchase Order for a Sewer Tank Truck for Maple Hill Sewer Operations budgeted for FY 2026-2027 at a cost of $103,200.00	James Proctor

James Proctor, Interim Utilities Director, presented the item. This was for a new tank truck for Maple Hill.

8.7	Approval of Purchase Order for a FY 2026 budgeted tandem axle dump truck for Pender County Utilities Water Operations in the amount of $159,987.00	James Proctor

James Proctor, Interim Utilities Director, presented the item. This was for a larger dump truck than previously asked for. It would replace the smaller one that is in the bone yard.

8.8	Approval of Transfer to D.A.R.E. for Purchase of Graduation Materials from General Fund Balance in the amount of $18,509.00	Alan Cutler

9. APPROVALS AND RESOLUTIONS

9.1	Approval of Contract Renewal for Debris Management with CrowderGulf	Tommy Batson

Tommy Batson, Emergency Management Director, presented the item. This was part of the original contract and is at no additional cost to the county.

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

9.2	Approval of Purchase Order for High Density Storage in the new LEC in the amount of $272,527.15	Nick West

Sarah Fulton, Strategic Director, presented the item. This was for the new Law Enforcement Center for tall storage.

Commisioner Springer made a motion to approve.
Vice Chairman George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Springer questioned if anyone had spoken with Daniels and Daniels regarding the lights at the LEC. Colby Sawyer, County Manager, replied that Daniels and Daniels had turned off the lights and were working on a solution for the pack lights that would meet the required specification for detention facilities but would hopefully not impact the neighbors.

9.3 Approval of Purchase Order, Project Budget Ordinance, and Budget Ordinance Amendment for the Construction of a Countywide Fleet Garage — Sarah Fulton, Nick West

Sarah Fulton, Strategic Director, presented the item. Fulton explained the item was for one main garage to contain the school system, fleet, and Pender EMS & Fire. The facility would be across from Rocky Point Elementary and would be able to serve the more than 743 apparatus from all three departments.

Commissioner Springer made a motion to approve.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
Chairman Burton voted affirmatively.
Vice Chairman George and Commissioner Tate voted in opposition.
The motion passed 3 to 2.

9.4 Discuss and Consider Contract Terms Related to Extension of Appeal Date — Colby Sawyer

Commissioner Tate was asking Vincent Valuations to waive the $800 a day fee or to amend the contract to waive the fee. Ryan Vincent, owner of Vincent Valuations, stated they could not waive it completely but were willing to negotiate.

9.5 Discussion and Consideration of the 2026 Reappraisal — Colby Sawyer

Katie Barber-Jones, County Attorney, went over the Machinery Act. Barber-Jones advised there was a new bill if, completely passed, the county would be forced to use the 2026 values and would extend the 2026 appeals to 2027. Commissioner Springer asked what her recommended solution was. Barber-Jones recommended going with the reappraisals and tools allowable to fix data. Chairman Burton asked her to explain what happens to the homes built or purchased in the last year if the county goes with the 2025 values. Barber-Jones said they would not be taxed. Chairman Burton noted that last year there was $75 million ad valorem and in order to maintain that with the new 2026 values, the tax rate would have to be reduced. Colby Sawyer, County Manager, said the county should use the 2026 schedule of valuations, 2026 measures with corrections, an appeal deadline of June 30, 2026, staff to mail a letter with an appeal application and extend tax hours for appeals.

Commissioner Springer made a motion to approve.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
Chairman Burton voted affirmatively.
Commissioners Tate and Vice Chairman George voted in opposition.
The motion passed 3 to 2.

If the bill passes, the county will have to reevaluate. Barber-Jones clarified, saying the county would have to use 2025 values this year, 2026 values next year and would have a longer appeal process next year.

9.6 Approval of Purchase Order and Contract Addendum to Smith Gardner, Inc. in the amount of $48,000.00 for the Montague Convenience Site Engineering — Colby Sawyer

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

9.7 Resolution Honoring Cason Justice as the 2026 Burroughs Wellcome Fund North Carolina Teacher of the Year — Jimmy T. Tate

Per note above, this item was moved to 9.1.

Commissioner Tate introduced the item.

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

10. DISCUSSION

Katie Barber-Jones stated she had items for the attorney client privilege.

Colby Sawyer mentioned the groundbreaking at the new library on May 6 at 10am in Hampstead.

Commissioner Groves spoke about a park for Maple Hill, 280 River Landing Drive, having low water pressure, Quintin Morgan getting Katie Barber-Jones up to date on Hornacek's issue and the motocross site, water for all in Pender County and the taxes.

Commissioner Tate thanked Sawyer and James Proctor, Interim Utilities Director, for meeting him that morning to talk about water in his district.

11. APPOINTMENTS

11.1 Appointment to the ABC Board — Tracy Sholders

Tracy Sholders, Clerk to the Board, presented the item. Sholders noted there was one (1) opening for District four (4) and one (1) opening for District three with originally one (1) application received for District three (3). However, the applicant was currently in their third term and could not serve another full term. Two (2) applicants, one (1) from District three (3) and one from District four (4) were submitted in the meantime. Chairman Burton requested they be brought back at the next meeting.

11.2 Appointment to the Library Board — Tracy Sholders

Tracy Sholders, Clerk to the Board, presented the item. Sholders stated there was one (1) opening for District three (3) with one (1) applicant.

Vice Chairman George made a motion to approve Alicia Greenberg-Vosper.
Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

11.3 Appointment to the Parks Foundation — Tracy Sholders

Tracy Sholders, Clerk to the Board, presented the item. Sholders explained there were approximately 15 seats on the board, but they did not fill them all. One (1) application had been received.

Vice Chairman George made a motion to approve Lenore Goldberg.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.

The motion passed 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

20. CLOSED SESSION (IF APPLICABLE)

    Commissioner Groves made a motion to go into closed session at 8:50pm.
    Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.
    The motion passed unanimously.

    Commissioner Groves made a motion to end closed session at 9:38pm.
    Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.
    The motion passed unanimously.

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

22. ADJOURNMENT

    Commissioner Groves made a motion to adjourn at 9:38pm.
    Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.
    The motion passed unanimously.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]