Minutes

Board of County Commissioners Regular Meeting
Monday, June 15, 2026 at 6:00 PM
Pender County Public Assembly Room
805 S. Walker Street, Burgaw, NC

PRESENT: Commissioner Jerry Groves
Chairman Randy Burton
Commissioner Brent Springer
Commissioner Jimmy T. Tate
Vice Chair Brad George

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

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

2. INVOCATION

   Chairman Burton 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.
   Vice Chairman George seconded the motion.
   The motion passed unanimously.

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

5. PUBLIC HEARING

5.1 Public Hearing on the FY 26-27 Annual Budget Margaret Blue

Colby Sawyer, County Manager, presented the item. Sawyer explained what the budget allows the county to do. Katie Barber-Jones, County Attorney, explained Bill 889, Property Tax Moratorium, stating it defers the implementation of the schedule of values, that counties would have to use the previous tax rates for tax bills, and it allows for the capture of any newly built or purchased property in 2025 to be valued and taxed. Sawyer presented an alternate revenue-neutral budget maintaining the current tax rate, continuing the way forward, adding 1.3 million to the schools' required needs, and funding Union Rescue (they would receive their tax rate).

Commissioner Groves stated that something he said at the last meeting upset some individuals. What he was told was that no water lines would be run for 2 to 3 people. The water would have to be flushed too much and would cost too much. There would not be enough homes on a new line to cover the cost of the service.

** Clerk's Note — Commissioner Springer arrived at 6:13pm.

6. PUBLIC INFORMATION

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Dr. Breedlove spoke about school needs.
Sandy Harris, Pender County Christian Services Executive Director, spoke about supporting them.
Penny Ramsey spoke about supporting the Atkinson Library.
Kenny Ramsey spoke about commissioners not listening to the people.
Nancy Ramsey spoke about disrespect amongst the board and spending on vehicles.
Henry Temple spoke about autos being cost-effective and Mt. Calvery donations.
Debbie Walker spoke about supporting Bill 889 and people working together.
Cheryl Highsmith spoke about water for the people without loans.
Linda Newton thanked Dr. Tate for his help.
Diane Gideons thanked the commissioners, managers and staff for being there throughout the merger.
Johny Stringfield spoke about basketball courts at the parks.
Janet Rivenbark, President of the Historical Society, asked for support and why some got assistance and others did not.
Eva Briggs spoke about being respectful, water, and working together.
Kay Davis spoke about school funding.
Walter Davis spoke about school funding.
Wesley Wooten spoke about Pender County companies getting work for the county.
Kim McGahey spoke about 2 commissioners being enriched by policies. (demanded their resignation)

Jule Rowland spoke about feral cat colonies.
Larry Highsmith spoke about Bill 889.
Tim Zizack spoke about budgets, doing 4-year re-evaluations, what is the general fund minimum, and considering an increase in sales tax to give to schools.
Tom Brown spoke about commissioners not bowing out gracefully.

Commissioner Tate stated that with the budget presented the county would barely survive. Commissioner Tate requested the restoration of the Willard Outreach at 100%, Penderlea Museum, Share the Table, Atkins Library, TDA, Burgaw Fire Department, Burgaw Museum, Rocky Point Fire Department, and PC Christian Services. Commissioner Tate also requested a change in the personnel policy for section 253 on-call, that if an employee is on call for a week, they are to get paid seven (7) hours of their hourly salary as compensation for being on-call that week. Commissioner Tate asked for the county to look into basketball courts at the new park and at the possibility of getting a grant writer to help with getting water to the citizens of Pender County.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

Vice Chairman George made a motion to consider the consent agenda.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
Chairman Burton and Commissioner Tate voted affirmatively.
Vice Chairman George voted in opposition.
The motion passed 3 to 1.

8.1	Approval of Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes from May 18, 2026	Tracy Sholders
8.2	Approval of a Resolution Authorizing the Upset Bid Process with respect to the Disposition by Sale of Parcel 3245-52-0278-0000 located near Morning Glory Rd in Rocky Point	Margaret Blue
8.3	Approval of a Resolution Authorizing the Upset Bid Process with respect to the Disposition by Sale of Parcel 3392-72-3997-0000 located on Lee Road in Maple Hill	Margaret Blue
8.4	Approval of a Resolution Authorizing the Upset Bid Process with respect to the Disposition by Sale of Parcel 3393-96-2921-0000 located on Webbtown Road in Maple Hill	Margaret Blue

8.5	Approval of a Memorandum of Understanding between Pender County DSS and NC Department of Health and Human Services	Rich Blankenship
8.6	Approval of a Memorandum of Agreement between NCDHHS and Pender County DSS for Data Sharing and Information Technology Security	Rich Blankenship
8.7	Approval of Purchase Order to United Rentals for Office Trailer at Hampstead Transfer Station for $33,439.00	Julie Clark
8.8	Approval of Purchase Order for Sludge Removal at the Wastewater Treatment Plant to McGill Composting or Lewis Farms due to Permit timing for $60,000.00	James Proctor
8.9	Approval of Sedgwick insurance settlement check to transfer to expenditure for vehicle repairs in the amount of $15,153.42	Alan Cutler
8.10	Approval of Fire Protection Agreement with the Town of Atkinson	Amy Burton
8.11	Approval of Fire Protection Agreement with the Town of Burgaw	Amy Burton
8.12	Approval of Fire Protection Agreement with the Town of Wallace	Amy Burton

8.13	Approval of Fire Protection Agreement with the Town of Surf City	Amy Burton
8.14	Approval of Pyrotechnics Display Permit for the Town of Surf City Fireworks Display	Amy Burton
8.15	Approval of Fire Protection Agreement with Rocky Point Volunteer Fire Department	Amy Burton
8.16	Approval of Fire Protection Agreement Maple Hill Volunteer Fire Department	Amy Burton
8.17	Approval of EMS Service Agreement for Union Rescue	Sarah Fulton
8.18	Approval of Pyrotechnics Display Permit for Union Volunteer Rescue Squad America's 250th Celebration	Amy Burton
8.19	Approval of Lease Agreement for Fire Substation in Watha	Sarah Fulton
8.20	Approval of lease for EMS Station 6	Sarah Fulton
8.21	Approval of a Purchase Order for Network Equipment Replacement to CDW Government, Inc. in the amount of $41,754.68	Marcel Miranda
8.22	Approval of Purchase Order for 911 Dispatch Computer Hardware to Dell, Inc. in the amount of $40,079.80 for the new LEC	Sarah Fulton

8.23 Approval of Purchase Order for 911 Center Audio/Visual System Installation and Hardware to NextWaveTEK, LLC in the Amount of $88,144.85 for the new LEC — Sarah Fulton

8.24 Approval of Purchase Order for Law Enforcement Center Network Equipment to CDW Government, Inc. in the amount of $117,889.07 — Sarah Fulton

8.25 Approval of Purchase Order to Capital Ford for the Purchase of Three 2025 Ford Maverick Vehicles for Inspections in the amount of $83,554.50 — Jerry Turbeville

9. APPROVALS AND RESOLUTIONS

9.1 Approval of Purchase Order for EMS Station 9 Physical Security and Wiring Installation to Nitor Solutions, Inc. in the Amount of $60,238.05 — Sarah Fulton

Sarah Fulton, Strategic Director, presented the item.

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

9.2 Approval of BOA and Change Order Contract Amendment for the Second Floor Mezzanine Railing in the new Law Enforcement Center project in the amount of $556,371.00 — Sarah Fulton

Sarah Fulton, Strategic Director, presented the item. Fulton stated this would delay the opening of the jail but that the original plan was for the sheriff's office and 911 to move in first and then the jail.

Commissioner Springer asked if the price for a taller fence outside had been received, with Fulton responding, not yet. Commissioner Springer made a motion to table the item till the fence price was received. The motion failed. Fulton explained it would delay the completion date if the item was tabled. Commissioner Springer made a motion to move the item to after item 9.4. The motion failed.

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

9.3	Approval of the Emergency Services and Transfer of Assets Agreement	Sarah Fulton

Sarah Fulton, Strategic Director, presented the item. Fulton explained the start of the process, the progress and the current state. Fulton noted the merger was approved by the Department of Justice and was on schedule for July 5, with a few items to be done afterward.

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

9.4	Approval of the FY 26-27 Budget Ordinance and Fee Schedule	Margaret Blue

Vice Chairman George made a motion to move item 9.4 to after 9.7.
Commissioner Groves seconded.
The motion passed unanimously.

Colby Sawyer, County Manager, presented the item. Sawyer stated the total to add back to the budget 100% of the requests for Union, Pender Christian Services, Penderlea Museum, Share the Table, Pender County Museum, Atkinson Library, the full School Capital ask and $50,000 to Burgaw Fire Department would be $1,127,073. Chairman Burton asked what this would look like with Sawyer stating the county would need an additional 1.1 cent in taxes or cut funding. Blue, explained that the Fund Balance is used for one-time funding, not recurring expenses. Sawyer explained the Fund Balance could be used to fund the schools' request for capital needs and would reduce the fund balance down to about 31% (reducing it by about 8.7 million). Sawyer stated that because they are using the property values under Senate Bill 889, they recommend using the tax rate of 73.75. Sawyer provided three (3) options for the budget: the first one being using the tax rate of 73.75, the second being to table for a special meeting with changes, and the third being capturing the schools full capital request from the fund balance.

Commissioner Tate requested a recess at 9:17pm.
Back in session at 9:23pm.

Commissioner Groves made a motion to move item 9.4 to the end of the meeting.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

Sawyer provided an updated budget that included 6 million of the school's capital request (the difference coming from the fund balance), 600,000 to Union Rescue (the difference coming from the fund balance) and 50,000 to outside agencies to be at the board's discretion. This is leaving the tax rate at 73.75. Questions about the prices of vehicles and leasing came up with Vice Chairman George noting they had tried leasing in the past but, due to the vastness of the county, they went through the allowed mileage quickly and ended up paying more.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to approve this final budget submitted.
Vice Chairman George seconded the motion.
Chairman Burton and Commissioner Springer voted affirmatively.
Commissioner Groves voted in opposition.
The motion passed 4 to 1.

9.5 Approve payoff of Pender EMS & Fire debts totaling $10,143,102 from the General Fund Balance — Margaret Blue

Meg Blue, Assistant County Manager/Finance Director, presented the item. Blue explained there were eleven (11) loans and eleven (11) leases and this would pay off a portion of those. The benefits are that the annual debit is freed up, reduced payments on interest and the other items would be paid off in 5 years.

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

9.6 Approval of the 2026 Personnel Policy — Pam Brame

Pam Brame, Human Resources Director, presented the item. Brame noted that most of the changes to the policy consisted of changes to incorporate Fire and EMS and their shifts. Brame stated that holidays will no longer be banked if the employee works on a holiday, they will be paid for the holiday as well. Volunteer time, bereavement and mental health time are rolled into what is called PTO.

Commissioner Tate asked for the felony hiring to be revised or removed from the policy depending on the felony background, and changing the length of an employee being held to a disciplinary action from 2 years to 1 year, or leaving the length up to the county manager and human resources. Sawyer suggested: After a written warning, the County Manager and Human Resources Director will determine the period of time an employee is ineligible for a promotion, transfer, advancement, bonus or termination.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to approve with the understanding that the policy would be brought back with information on competitive maternal health, on-call 7 hours and EMS Pay.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

9.7 Approval of the Departmental Workforce Development Plans — Pam Brame

Pam Brame, Human Resources Director, presented the item. Brame stated there was a career development plan for each department for advancement and learning.

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

9.8 Approval of Disbursement of Collected Water System Participation Fees — James Proctor

Katie Barber-Jones stated Utilities had provided her with 20 years worth of historical data so far, and she would like to come back at a later meeting with an actual presentation and hopefully some solutions regarding refunds with interest.

James Proctor, Interim Public Utilities Director, noted there had been 1,552 homes signed up for water connection years ago. Depending on what phase they signed up in depends on how much they paid. The department was still going through all the records to verify all the information, if they had already received a refund or not and if the home had been sold. Proctor was trying to locate a policy on whether the payment stayed with the home or the payer.

Commissioner Groves made a motion for the item to be brought back at the first August meeting.
Commissioner Tate seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

10. DISCUSSION

Colby Sawyer stated he had two items for the closed session; acquisition of real property and attorney client privilege.

Vice Chairman George stated he was proud of his wife's career and resigned as commissioner.

Commissioner Springer thanked Vice Chairman George for his service and stated the groundbreaking at Renovation was powerful.

Commissioner Tate said he understood Vice Chairman George's resignation but thanked him for his service and hoped the board could work together cohesively moving forward.

Commissioner Groves also noted he understood Vice Chairman George's resignation and thanked him for his service.

Chairman Burton stated he was surprised by Vice Chairman George's resignation and that he never voted based on what someone told him to. There were no strings.

Commissioner Groves made a motion to go into closed session at 9:50pm.
Vice Chairman George seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to end closed session at 10:59pm.
Commissioner Groves seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

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

20. CLOSED SESSION (IF APPLICABLE)

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

22. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chairman George made a motion to adjourn at 11:20pm.
Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]