



Minutes

**Board of County Commissioners Special Meeting
Wednesday, June 24, 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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Burton called the meeting to order at 6:04pm.

2. INVOCATION

Commissioner Groves led the Invocation.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Burton led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

5. PUBLIC COMMENT (PUBLIC COMMENT IS AT THE DISCRETION
OF THE BOARD CHAIRS.)

Chairman Burton explained that Special Meetings usually do not have public comment but, due to the nature of the meeting, he was going to allow ten (10) individuals to speak for three (3)

minutes each.

Sarah Ware - spoke about supporting the schools.

Jessica Bellflower - spoke about supporting the schools.

Dean Heath - spoke about supporting the schools.

Paula King Jacobs - spoke about supporting the schools.

Megan Winstead - spoke about supporting the schools.

Alyssa Romero - spoke about supporting the schools.

Kristen Lash - spoke about supporting the schools.

Ben Wespi - spoke about supporting the schools.

Karli Mikula - spoke about supporting the schools.

Kenyen Johnson - spoke about supporting the schools.

6. FY 2026-2027 BUDGET

Don Hall, Chairman of the Board of Education, asked Dr. Breedlove, Pender County Schools Superintendent, to explain that the shortfall was the State's fault and to explain the numbers. Dr. Breedlove thanked the board for meeting with them two (2) days after the request for a meeting.

Dr. Breedlove explained that back in May he had presented two (2) options to the Board of Commissioners: 1 to maintain services and staff at \$33,789,720 (an additional \$4 million), 2 to advance services at \$37,323,020 (an additional \$3.5 million). At the 6/15/26 Board of Commissioners meeting, the school was budgeted at \$31,890,720, a short fall of \$2.7 million. The school started looking at the least impactful ways to make up this shortfall. With 86% of the budget consisting of human resources, it would mean cutting twenty-one (21) positions. Recently, Pender County Schools have been able to come up in every category academically and cut the attrition rate in half. It has been four (4) years since the General Assembly has passed a budget, so the schools have not received any increase to cover the increases in insurance, retirement, etc.

Board of Education Commissioner Tom Reeves asked Dr. Breedlove to share information on underperforming schools and where the county stands currently. Dr. Breedlove stated when he came on board there were eight (8) schools noted as underperforming. There are currently three (3) and he hopes to have the number at zero (0) next year.

Commissioner Hall requested Dr. Breedlove to elaborate on the reorganization that had taken place. Dr. Breedlove explained that they had repurposed positions, applied for grants to try and not reduce staff. Dr. Breedlove assured Pender County that the school board was using taxpayer dollars efficiently.

Chairman Burton asked County Manager, Colby Sawyer, to provide some background on the budget. Sawyer stated that the level one (1) budget (initial budgets) and the final approved budget had a reduction of \$26.6 million. The schools requested an additional \$4 million this year and in order to balance the budget without a tax increase, further cuts were necessary. The fund balance is to be used for emergencies and non-recurring expenses. The state's shortfall created this situation. If the county increases its spending per person, it can never be decreased and would create another challenge in the future. The schools requested \$900,000 and we provided \$1.3 million.

Board of Education Commissioner, Jason Spivey, questioned the number of residential and commercial buildings in the past. Sawyer replied there had been 6 residential permits, 1 commercial permit and 1 ALE permit in April. Commissioner George went over the revenue from building permits. For every \$1 in revenue for a home built in 2022, it cost the county \$1.44 in services, so we lost money. For commercial property, for every \$1 in revenue, we received \$6.08. For agricultural, for every \$1 in revenue, we received \$3.43. In 2022, 96% of revenue was from tax-based residential services.

There were questions about whether there were any assets that could be sold to cover the shortfall, why 421 was not being developed commercially for the revenue and delaying the construction of the Hampstead Library.

Chairman Burton asked for the school board to explain what the state cut, how much and what it was for. Chairman Burton stated the state actually shorted \$4.5 million. Lisa Nowlin, Chief Finance Officer for Pender County Schools, replied a state budget was not passed, there were no increases, so the schools were responsible for any increases, and they had over 1200 employees to cover. Chairman Burton asked for clarification on instructional coaches. Dr. Breedlove stated they go to multiple schools and help teachers and have improved retention rates. The average salary all in is \$87,000 for a certified employee in Pender County Schools.

Commissioner Springer asked Sawyer how many pennies taxes would have to be raised to fund the gap. Sawyer responded 2.54 pennies on the current valuation. For next year, that would be about \$20 to \$25.40 per \$100,000 of a home's value. Commissioner Springer asked if the school board had looked to see what they could do to circumvent the gap, such as cutting third party vendors.

Commissioner Tate commented that the meeting had been very productive and requested the school board be fully funded from the fund balance this time. Barber-Jones noted that a motion would be needed to suspend the rules to add to the agenda in order to take action. Commissioner Tom Reeves inquired the amount of the fund balance. Meg Blue, Assistant County Manager/Finance Director, stated the current balance was 68.6 million but after current planned uses, the balance would be 48 million. There was some discussion about ensuring this would be a one-time use of the fund balance. Commissioner Tate requested the numbers for graduate pay levels from Dr. Breedlove to review. Chairman Hall suggested the two (2) boards meet more often, with Chairman Burton suggesting quarterly.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to suspend the procedures to allow an item to be added to the agenda. That item being revisiting our budget.

Commissioner Springer seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to amend the agenda to consider the FY 2026-2027 PC Budget Ordinance to entertain a motion to revise the budget in accordance with the proposed amount the school is asking for tonight, an addition of 2.7 million dollars.

Vice Chairman George seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chairman George made a motion to adjourn at 8:11pm.
Commissioner Groves seconded.
The motion carried unanimously.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]