



## Budget Message

February 19, 2024

The Honorable Mayor Brenda Bozeman  
Esteemed Members of the Leland Town Council

Dear Mayor Bozeman and Leland Town Councilmembers,

I am writing to formally present the proposed Annual Budget for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2024 and concluding June 30, 2025, in accordance with the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act and North Carolina General Statute 159-11.

The proposed budget, totaling \$56 million, has been strictly crafted to ensure balance without the appropriation of fund balance. Notably, however, the proposed budget entails an adjusted tax rate from 0.23 per \$100 in valuation to 0.39 per \$100 in valuation.

The Town Council has clearly indicated, through multiple public budget meetings, that a change in the Town's philosophy and approach to service delivery and long-term operations is needed to assure sustainability for future years. The Town has historically imposed a low tax rate and maintained a lean organization that has postponed many infrastructure, facility, and operational improvement projects. The Town Council has communicated to staff that the time has come where delaying projects is not appropriate for the viability of the Town and the well-being of the citizens. This budget reflects the Town Council's conscientious decision to invest in infrastructure improvement projects, create a fiscally responsible fund balance, establish a new standard for public safety, and improve the quality-of-life opportunities for the citizenry.

Numerous factors have influenced our annual budgetary discussions, including the prevailing conditions of the national, state, and local economies, as well as the priorities delineated by the Town Council, dedicated staff, and engaged citizens. While we are appreciative of our resilience in weathering economic fluctuations, recent years have necessitated prudent adjustments to our decision-making processes and long-term outlook on service delivery.

As we transition into another budgetary year, we continue to confront emerging external challenges, such as escalating inflation and potential statutory revisions. The ability to balance current and improved services to support our growing community's quality of life is increasingly difficult. Nevertheless, our staff remains steadfast in their commitment to fiscal responsibility to ensure the sustained provision of tangible benefits and services to all residents.

Mindful of external economic dynamics, regulatory evolutions, identified community improvements, and our collective aspiration to realize key projects, the proposed budget reflects prudent deliberation and responsible planning. It is our steadfast endeavor to fulfill the Town's obligations to its residents, achieve established objectives, and safeguard our fiscal health.

In formulating the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 (FY24-25) Budget, our staff adhered to the guidance provided by the Town Council. The resulting budget harmonizes the maintenance of existing Town programs and essential services with the initiation of new plans and projects, while also planning for our future. Key appropriations in the budget include \$5.5M in roadway improvements, \$2M in emergency contingency funding, \$1.3M for fire apparatus, \$1M in new police personnel, \$550k in new fire personnel. These budgetary allocations, as well as all others, are aligned with the vision statements articulated by the Town Council, thereby ensuring a strategic alignment of our financial resources with our collective aspirations.

Anticipated revenues have been calculated based on historical financial trends, sales tax, fire fee, and population data, property tax valuations from Brunswick County, and economic projections provided by the North Carolina League of Municipalities. While the Town has historically realized revenues exceeding expenditures, thus maintaining a commendable fund balance, it is imperative that we fortify our reserves to ensure continued financial stability moving forward.

In summation, the proposed budget of \$56 million embodies a balanced fiscal plan that earnestly addresses the priorities outlined by the Town Council for FY24-25, while upholding principles of fiscal prudence. As stewards of public resources, we are steadfast in our commitment to providing the essential services for the citizenry that they cannot easily provide for themselves by prioritizing community safety, investing in critical infrastructure, providing reasonable quality of life amenities, and protecting the natural environment, while maintaining service excellence and endeavoring to uphold reasonable rates and fees.

This budget epitomizes the Town's unwavering dedication to enhancing and sustaining our community, while steadfastly positioning Leland for enduring financial stability.

The Town encourages public participation in the budget process. To help residents learn more about the proposed budget, Town staff will be holding a Budget Open House on March 5 from 5 to 7 p.m. at Town Hall, located at 102 Town Hall Drive. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn about each department's services and service improvement opportunities and speak to department leaders in a floating, open house format starting at 5 p.m. This will be followed by a brief presentation and question and answer session at 6 p.m.

The Budget Open House is an educational initiative intended to better inform residents about the content and value of the proposed budget. The opportunity to provide feedback to Council regarding the budget will be during the budget public hearing at the Town Council meeting on March 21 at 6 p.m.

Sincerely,



David A. Hollis  
Town Manager

## Town Council Service Area Vision Statements FY2024-2025:

### Internal Support

- Be a workplace that attracts high performers of various backgrounds who value learning, innovation, and service excellence.
- Be a community that is transparent, fair, and fiscally responsible with the Town's resources to ensure the future sustainability of the Town and its citizens.
- Be a governing body that proactively educates and communicates with the public, and municipal, county, and state officials.

### Public Safety

- Be the safest southeastern NC town through preventative and responsive emergency services and citizen engagement.
- Be a town well-prepared for, responsive to, and able to recover from natural and man-made hazards.

### Public Places

- Be a community that finds opportunities and leverages partnerships to have unique, inviting, and connected gathering places.
- Be a community that protects and promotes sustainability for our natural environment, facilities, and parks.
- Be a safe and healthy community with fun, accessible, and stimulating recreational and cultural activities for all.

### Public Services

- Be a resilient, sustainable, and environmentally conscious community.
- Be a community that proactively advocates, accommodates, and plans for safe and accessible pedestrian, vehicular, and multi-modal movement within the transportation network.

### Business & Neighborhood Enhancement

- Be an inclusive, connected, strong, beautiful, and healthy community comprised of distinct, complementary, and diverse neighborhoods that offer housing options for all residents.
- Be a town well-positioned within the economic and tourism markets of southeastern North Carolina.
- Be a town that leverages our proximity to area beaches, blueways, air and nautical ports, rail connections, neighboring municipalities, and institutions of higher learning.
- Be a center for advanced, innovative manufacturing and technology employment.

Outlined within the FY24-25 Budget are specific initiatives that directly support these endeavors, including:

#### **Internal Support**

- Addition of 3 New Full-Time Positions, (1) Deputy Town Clerk, (1) IT Technician, and (1) Fleet & Asset Position.
- Allocation of \$2 Million to the General Fund Contingency to fortify the Town's financial resilience for the future.
- Allocation of \$6.5 Million for Debt Payments.

#### **Public Safety**

- 33.1% of the Overall Budget
- Addition of 10 New Full-Time Positions, including (5) Firefighters, (3) Police Officers, (1) Police Lieutenant, and (1) Police Sergeant.
- Allocation of 715K for 9 (4 replacements and 5 new) Police Patrol Ready Trucks
- Allocation of \$55K for Red Dot Sight technology to provide better situational awareness and safety for Police officers.
- Allocation of \$1.3 Million for a new fire truck to bolster our community's safety assets.
- Allocation of \$164K for Fire/Rescue capital equipment including, a Heavy Extrication Kit, and Swift Water Inflatable Rescue Boat, Motor, and Trailer
- Allocation of 35K for a 5-Ton Rescue/Evacuation Vehicle

#### **Public Places**

- Allocation of \$80K for Sturgeon Creek Park Improvements.
- Allocation of \$6K for Cypress Cove Park Improvements.
- Allocation of \$60K for Baldwin Drive Improvements.
- Allocation of \$300K for Oceangate Plaza Improvements.
- Allocation of \$40K for a Comprehensive Plan Update (Parks Recreation and Open Space).
- Allocation of \$750K for property acquisition.

#### **Public Services**

- Allocation of \$5.5 Million for street resurfacing and enhancement initiatives, given the average twenty-year life cycle of our streets. The Town is committed to prioritizing infrastructure by annually resurfacing and improving 5% of Town-owned roads.
- Allocation of \$50K for the connection of a sidewalk between Baldwin and Fairview Roads.
- Allocation of \$355K for intersection, road improvements.
- Allocation of \$70K for stormwater mapping and upgrades.

#### **Business & Neighborhood Enhancement**

- Allocation of \$30K to have a Strategic Plan created for the Town.
- Allocation of \$11K for the Navassa Road Corridor Design
- Allocation of \$10K for Emerging Technologies
- Allocation of \$250K for Economic Development Opportunities