



102 Town Hall Drive | Leland, North Carolina 28451
Phone (910) 371-0148 | Fax (910) 371-1073

Budget Message

February 19, 2026

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

Dear Mayor Bozeman and Leland Town Councilmembers,

I am pleased to present the proposed annual budget for the upcoming fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027, in accordance with the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act and North Carolina General Statute 159-11. The proposed balanced budget totals \$50 million and reduces the tax rate to 0.25 per \$100 in valuation.

Each year, the Town conducts a comprehensive evaluation of municipal services to ensure maximum value for our citizens. By utilizing a zero-based budgeting framework, all departments are required to justify each expenditure from zero, rather than simply adjusting the prior year amount. This rigorous methodology allows the leadership team to critically analyze service levels, optimize resource allocation, and strategically align our fiscal priorities with the evolving needs of the community.

We are pleased to present a balanced budget that serves as a clear fiscal roadmap for the Town's future. More than a financial document, this budget represents a strategic investment in our long-term vision, mission, and core values shaped through collaboration among Town Council, staff, and the community as part of the 2030 Strategic Plan process. Aligned with our five Strategic Priority Areas of Safe Community, Resilient High-Quality Infrastructure and Environment, Communication and Engagement, Organizational Excellence, and Business and Neighborhood Enhancement, this budget positions the Town to responsibly meet today's needs while preparing for a sustainable, resilient, and prosperous future.

The proposed budget was built using the Town Council's foundational items as the core of the budget:

- Staff Salaries and Benefits: Fund current staffing levels necessary to maintain expected municipal service levels
- Debt Payments: Fund Public Safety facilities and apparatuses, infrastructure, municipal parks, and buildings
- Roadway Resurfacing: Resurface 5 percent of Town-owned roadways to maintain an average 20-year lifecycle
- Emergency Contingency Funding: Address natural disasters and other unforeseen emergency events
- Fire Apparatus: The purchase of a fire truck is a foundational item for the Town but is excluded from this budget as two were purchased in the current fiscal year, as approved by Town Council during the previous year's budget process

Brenda Bozeman
Mayor

Leland Hyer
Councilmember

Bob Campbell
Mayor Pro-Tem

Frank Pendleton
Councilmember

Veronica Carter
Councilmember

David A. Hollis
Town Manager



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Beyond the foundational items, the proposed budget includes the following highlighted key service area initiatives aligned with the Town Council's Strategic Plan to improve or maintain the Town's offerings to our citizens:

- Pedestrian Infrastructure Investments: Improve pedestrian safety, accessibility, and grant eligibility for pedestrian projects
- Swift Water Rescue Boat and Double-Stack Trailer: Enhance Fire Department rescue capabilities during extreme weather flooding events and swift water emergencies
- Mini Excavator Replacement: Replace end-of-life equipment to maintain reliable infrastructure maintenance operations
- Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBAs): Provide firefighters with modern respiratory protection and life-safety equipment
- Brush Truck Upfit/Skid Unit: Support rapid brushfire suppression and emergency fire response in park lands and undeveloped areas
- Vector Control Fogger: Support improved and expanded mosquito and vector control efforts to protect public health and well-being
- Southeastern North Carolina Airborne Law Enforcement (SABLE) Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Drone: Conduct Public Safety emergency response assessments and aerial inspections
- Brush Cutter Attachment: Clear overgrown vegetation along roadsides and municipal properties
- George Washington Historical Marker to commemorate the Town's historical connection to George Washington
- Traffic Light Transfer Switches: Keep traffic signals along major highways operational during extended power outages
- Police and Fire Vehicle Replacements: Replace aging vehicles to keep emergency units in service and personnel safe
- One IT Analyst Position: This position will support and maintain the Public Safety Department's technology and equipment to ensure reliable, secure, and uninterrupted emergency operations
- One Facilities Maintenance Technician Position: This position will perform preventative maintenance and repairs on municipal buildings
- Two Grounds Maintenance Technician Positions: These positions will maintain municipal parks, public spaces, and rights-of-way through landscaping, mowing, trash removal, and general grounds upkeep
- Two Police Officer Positions: These positions will be added within the Traffic Division, enhancing the proactive enforcement of laws and protection of life, property, and the traveling public
- Three Firefighter Positions: These positions will support progress toward meeting NFPA minimum staffing requirements on all apparatus and strengthen response to fire and emergency incidents
- One Community Risk Reduction Fire Captain Position: This position will lead training, educational initiatives, and public outreach to reduce community risks

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Moving into the new fiscal year, the Town will continue to navigate ongoing challenges, including rising inflation and potential regulatory changes that may impact operations and long-term planning. Despite these uncertainties, staff remain committed to the efficient delivery of high-quality services and to enhancing the overall quality of life for residents. Through thoughtful planning, responsible resource management, and a focus on continuous improvement, the Town will balance service levels to meet the evolving demands of growth while maintaining fiscal stability and organizational excellence.

The Town's revenue projections are based upon a foundation of data-driven forecasting and analysis, ensuring a high degree of fiscal accuracy. Projections are synthesized from a rigorous review of certified property tax valuations provided by Brunswick County, specialized economic forecasts from the North Carolina League of Municipalities, and an internal analysis of historical financial trends. The revenue portfolio is primarily anchored by ad valorem taxes and population-based sales tax distributions; however, the Town remains committed to a diversified fiscal strategy. By leveraging the full spectrum of statutorily authorized revenue streams, including fire fees, Powell Bill distributions, municipal vehicle taxes, and franchise taxes, the Town proactively mitigates the direct tax burden on property owners. This comprehensive approach allows for a balanced and equitable budget that sustains the high-quality services essential to the community's vitality.

To encourage public participation in the budget process, Town Council and staff will be holding a Budget Q&A Forum on March 9 at 6 p.m. at Town Hall, providing an opportunity for residents to learn more about the proposed budget and ask questions of Council and staff. The public hearing for the budget will take place during the Regular Council Meeting on March 19 at 6 p.m. at Town Hall.

In conclusion, this proposed budget serves as a definitive fiscal roadmap, translating the Town of Leland's strategic aspirations into a disciplined financial reality. By utilizing a zero-based framework and meticulously aligning expenditures with the five Strategic Priority Areas, this budget ensures the Town remains exceptionally well-positioned to navigate the complexities of future growth while maintaining a resilient financial foundation. This budget represents a calculated investment in the community's longevity, prioritized through targeted infrastructure enhancements, the fortification of Public Safety services, and the expansion of community amenities. Rooted in the collaborative vision established by our citizens and the Town leadership, this plan defines a path to a prosperous and sustainable legacy, striving for an unparalleled quality of life for Leland residents for years to come.

Sincerely,

David Hollis
Town Manager

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