



Budget Message

February 24, 2025

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, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026, in accordance with the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act and North Carolina General Statute 159-11. The proposed balanced budget totals \$53 million and maintains the current tax rate of 0.27 per \$100 in valuation without an appropriation from fund balance.

Each year, we approach the budget with fresh eyes to evaluate and analyze existing services provided to our citizens and identify cost-effective ways to improve or expand them. We are mindful not to simply carry over expenses from the previous year. Departments are asked to justify the expenses requested to provide the necessary services. These requests are then collectively and thoroughly examined by the entire leadership team and refined to balance resource utilization within the Town's various service areas.

We are excited to present a balanced budget that preserves basic service offerings and supports moderate improvements in key areas. We remain focused on our primary function as local government to provide services to the citizenry that they cannot otherwise provide for themselves, namely, public safety, public infrastructure, public spaces, code compliance, emergency response, and economic vitality. These comprise the majority of the Town's budgeted expenses, along with the internal services necessary to support these functions.

The proposed budget includes the following highlighted key service area initiatives to improve or maintain the Town's offerings to our citizens:

- Fire engine replacement for two 20-year-old apparatus to ensure safe, reliable emergency response and compliance with National Fire Protection Association standards
- Police vehicle replacements to keep personnel safe and in-service
- Repaving and repair of approximately four miles of roadway to improve infrastructure integrity and aesthetics
- Six new firefighter positions to fully staff the ladder apparatus on each shift
- One new police position to provide in-service supervision to the traffic enforcement division
- Emergency management tabletop training to prepare staff for real life scenarios
- Roadway condition assessment to identify the subsequent year's capital improvement projects
- Traffic light generator back-up to keep signals operational during extended power outages
- Emergency contingency funding to address potential natural disasters or other unforeseen events
- Additional public works vehicle to improve crew efficiency and service coverage
- Stormwater infrastructure assessment to identify deficiencies and plan for improvement projects
- Street thermoplastic striping equipment to perform in-house repair and installation of crosswalk, stop bar, and longitudinal roadway paintings to aid in reducing costs

- Website and mobile application development to improve information access and public notifications
- Computer system migration to in-house management to reduce long-term costs
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan update to identify potential recreation opportunities and aid in qualifying for grant funding
- Small area planning initiatives to develop streetscape designs and also aid in qualifying for grant funding

Guided by the Town's strategic planning process, the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 (FY25-26) budget aligns with the long-term vision, mission, and core values established through Town Council and staff retreats, planning meetings, and community input. It focuses on five Strategic Priority Areas: Safe Community, Resilient High-Quality Infrastructure and Environment, Communication and Engagement, Organizational Excellence, and Business and Neighborhood Enhancement, ensuring fiscal responsibility and transparency while fostering strategic investments in Leland's future.

As we move into the new fiscal year, we will continue to navigate challenges such as rising inflation and potential regulatory changes. Balancing current services with the demands of growth remains a challenge, but our staff is committed to delivering essential services and enhancing the quality of life for all residents. We are focused on meeting the Town's obligations, advancing key goals, and ensuring long-term financial stability as Leland continues to grow and thrive.

Revenue projections are based on historical financial trends, property tax valuations from Brunswick County, and economic forecasts from the North Carolina League of Municipalities. The primary sources of revenue continue to be ad valorem taxes on real and personal property existing or registered within the jurisdictional boundaries, and sales taxes collected within the County and distributed based on the Town's population. Other sources, including fire fees, Powell Bill distributions, municipal vehicle taxes, franchise taxes, and other miscellaneous taxes and fees, comprise the remainder of the total revenue. The Town is utilizing all statutorily allowed revenue sources available to lessen and balance the tax burden on its property owners and citizens.

We encourage public participation in the budget process. Town Council and staff will be holding a Budget Q&A Forum on March 4 at 6 p.m. at Town Hall, providing an opportunity for residents to learn more about the proposed budget and ask questions. The public hearing for the budget to gather further community input will take place during the Regular Council Meeting on March 20 at 6 p.m. at Town Hall.

In conclusion, the proposed budget serves as a strategic roadmap for Leland's continued growth and success. By balancing fiscal responsibility with targeted investments in key infrastructure, public safety, and community amenities, this budget ensures the Town remains well-positioned to meet the needs of our residents while planning for the future. Through thoughtful planning and community collaboration, we are laying the foundation for a prosperous, resilient Leland for years to come.

Sincerely,



David A. Hollis
Town Manager

Town Council Strategic Priority Areas FY2025-2026:

Safe Community

The Town of Leland seeks to foster a community where every resident feels safe and secure by implementing proactive measures, enhancing public safety services, and promoting community engagement. Our commitment is to create an environment where individuals, families, and businesses thrive in peace, free from crime and hazards, with accessible resources and a responsive, transparent governance structure that ensures the well-being of all.

Resilient, High-Quality Infrastructure and Environment

The Town of Leland is committed to enhancing mobility, interconnectivity, and walkability by improving road conditions, expanding sidewalks, and increasing multi-use pathways. We aim to provide resilient stormwater management and a flood risk mitigation system to safeguard residents and businesses. Additionally, we are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the Town's natural environment by preserving green spaces, open areas, water access, and conservation lands for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

Communication and Engagement

The Town of Leland aims to enhance public engagement and trust by increasing participation in Town activities, improving transparency, strengthening social media presence, and elevating customer service satisfaction. Internally, the focus is on better communication and collaboration among departments. Externally, the Town seeks to promote its achievements and services, ensure effective crisis communication, and foster positive relationships with other government entities. Additionally, the Town is committed to expanding and diversifying recreational services to improve residents' quality of life through accessible and valued parks and recreation programs.

Organizational Excellence

The Town of Leland seeks to demonstrate forward-thinking and high-performing standards within the Town government through exceptional leadership, internal support functions, innovation, and strategic planning by promoting an organizational climate that fosters an exceptional, diverse, engaged, and healthy workforce that delivers excellent services. The Town also seeks to have the appropriate facilities and necessary equipment available to serve the public.

Business and Neighborhood Enhancement

The Town of Leland is focused on fostering partnerships that promote planned growth, enhance community pride, and strengthen its sense of place. The Town seeks to grow and strengthen economic prosperity through exceptional service and collaborative efforts to recruit and retain quality organizations that advance our commercial, industrial, residential, health, tourism, and hospitality sectors.