Town of River Bend

Fiscal Year 2026-2027

Annual Budget Message

(A summary of the Annual Budget)

and

Annual Operating Budget Ordinance

Town of River Bend, North Carolina
45 Shoreline Drive
River Bend, NC 28562

252-638-3870
www.riverbendnc.org

Fiscal Year 2026-2027

Annual Budget Message

And

Operating Budget Ordinance

Mayor

Mark Bledsoe

Town Council

Morris "Buddy" Sheffield*
Brian Leonard
Jeff Weaver
Lisa Benton
Kathy Noonan

*also serves as Mayor Pro Tempore

Prepared By:

Town Manager

Delane Jackson

Finance Director

Mandy Gilbert

Budget Message

Honorable Mayor and Members of Council
Town of River Bend, North Carolina:

May 28, 2026

Pursuant to Section 159-11 of the North Carolina General Statutes, the Town of River Bend's proposed budget for the Fiscal Year (FY) beginning July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2027 is hereby submitted for your consideration. This budget represents the commitment of the Council to the vision statement and responds to the goals the Council discussed at the Budget Kick-Off meeting on January 15, 2026 and adopted on February 12, 2026:

1. Continue to provide a safe, dynamic, and attractive community for people of all ages, and continue to address the changing demographic composition of the Town.
2. Continue to provide safe drinking water and quality treatment of wastewater by diligently maintaining current systems, prudent fiscal management and prioritizing efforts to build new systems.
3. Continue to operate wastewater treatment facilities to maintain regulatory compliance and serve the current and future needs of the Town.
4. Continue to work with advisory boards as a means to encourage citizen participation in Town government.
5. Continue to be good stewards of the natural environment through planned stormwater and floodplain management efforts.
6. Continue to cooperate regionally and with other municipalities and, where appropriate, share ideas and resources.
7. Maintain a commitment to the Council-Manager form of government, and to support an adequate and well-trained staff to serve the current and future needs of the community.
8. Continue to employ sound fiscal management practices to ensure the long-term financial viability of the Town.
9. Maintain a visionary posture, acknowledging that change is inevitable.
10. Continue to conduct the business of the Town with complete transparency and integrity.

Over the course of four budget workshops in April and May and following numerous hours of staff research and development, this budget was explained in detail and each expenditure and revenue item considered relative to the long-term goals of this community. This document includes the terms agreed upon by Council during the budget workshops. The uncertainty created by inflation, the war in Iran and state-level politics impacted the budget process. As of today, it is still unknown how long and to what degree inflation, high gas prices and possible property tax regulations will be impacting our town, state and nation. As always, two major considerations during budget preparation are the tax rate and utility rates. After reviewing all proposed expenditures and revenues, and considering the economic outlook, the originally proposed budget included no change to the tax rate. However, after reviewing the proposal, the majority of Council agreed to

include a tax rate increase of 2¢, which would increase the tax rate to 30¢. The water and sewer rates remain unchanged.

The annual budget process is influenced by external factors including the condition of the national, state, and local economies, and the needs identified in our community by the elected body, staff, and advisory boards, and the goals noted above. All these factors are considered in this budget and armed with the knowledge that this document represents a significant amount of careful consideration and study, we are confident that it will allow the Town to meet its obligations, fulfill its goals, and remain fiscally strong.

Overview

The budget being presented for your consideration is balanced in accordance with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act. The total operating budget for the three major funds are:

General Fund	$ 2,995,400
Water Fund	$ 744,500
Sewer Fund	$ 802,700
Total Operating Budget	$ 4,542,600

In addition to the three major operating funds noted above, the town also has four minor funds that we operate for accounting purposes. They are - Capital Reserves for the General Fund ($229,425), Water Fund ($25,850) and Sewer Fund ($36,250), along with a Law Enforcement Separation Allowance Fund ($1,100). The total allocation to these four funds in FY27 is $292,625 and they are listed separately in the budget ordinance.

The grand total for the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 budget is **$4,835,225**.

General Fund

The General Fund is used to account for resources traditionally associated with government which are not required legally or by sound financial management to be accounted for in another fund. This fund is established at the inception of a government and exists throughout the government's life. Expenditures are divided into functional departments in order to present a clear understanding of the costs of providing certain services. Personnel assigned to a specific functional area are paid from that department. We use a labor allocation formula to more accurately reflect the work being performed by each staff member within each of the three major funds.

The total expenditure budget for the General Fund, including transfers, is $2,995,400. Overall, General Fund spending increased $287,605 as compared to the amended FY 25-26 budget (as of April 9, 2026). Revenue, as required by law, is balanced with the expenditure portion of the budget. This budget contains an appropriation from fund balance of

$298,996, which is a $93,116 or 45% increase from the amended FY 25-26 fund balance appropriation of $205,880.

Expenditure Highlights by Department

While not attempting to cover specifics for all of the seventeen (17) departments within the General Fund, what follows are some highlights of the more significant expenditures and programs being proposed for FY 26-27. This year's proposed budget keeps capital spending at a relatively low level of $224,900 following capital spending of $151,344 during the FY 25-26 budget.

Street Maintenance: The Town owns and maintains over 17 miles of streets. Each year our engineer reviews an evaluation he performed of all our streets in order to determine the priority for our paving funds. Powell Bill funding is used to support street maintenance. It is appropriated by and received from the State based upon our population and number of miles of town-maintained roads. This revenue source has been relatively level in recent years, while costs continue to escalate.

This year we are budgeting $229,300 to follow the plan developed by our engineer to maintain the integrity of our roadways. Historically, the total amount we expect to pay for contracted paving services exceeds the amount we expect to receive in Powell Bill funds; therefore, local revenue will be utilized to complete these projects.

Stormwater: We have allocated $32,000 of funding within the stormwater Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), but have no specific project identified.

Public Buildings (Facilities): We plan to continue our efforts to be good custodians of our public facilities by making a few needed repairs and some modest improvements.

Public Works: The Department of Public Works pays for, among other items, the cost to operate streetlights and the cost to operate and maintain two vehicles.

Parks and Recreation: The budget being presented includes continued funding for our Parks and Recreation programs. Excluded from the Parks and Recreation budget again this year is funding for the River Bend Community Organic Garden. It is an educational community garden operated and maintained by a group of volunteers but functions as a component of Parks and Recreation. The budget contains $88,000 for the construction of two pickleball courts.

Police: Expenditures for the Police Department include salaries and benefits for seven full-time and multiple part-time officers, vehicle maintenance, uniforms, fuel, 1 new vehicle, equipment, Community Watch and more. We provide 24/7/365 police presence within the Town. The Police Department's budget of $885,900 is the largest in the General Fund, representing 29.58 % of General Fund expenditures.

Elections: Due to a recent Town Charter amendment, the town's municipal elections were moved to even-numbered years. This change resulted in a substantial reduction in the town's cost for elections. The first election under this new format was held in November, 2022. The next town election will be held in November, 2026.

Governing Board: This year's budget contains $40,000 to fund special projects that may receive Council approval during the fiscal year.

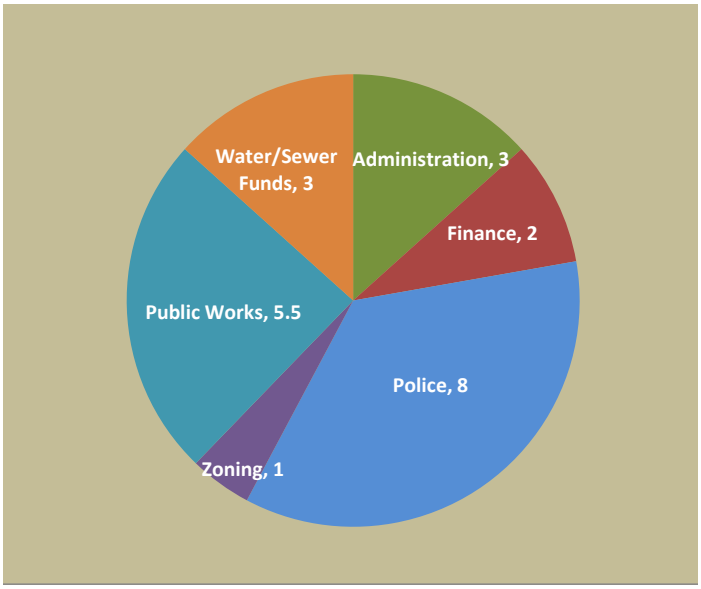
Throughout the budget process, Council and staff were mindful of the need to control costs while continuing to provide necessary services and maintain our infrastructure. Our efforts resulted in budgeted expenditures that are quite lean while maintaining the current level of services.

Requested projects and expenditures were kept to a minimum in order to develop a balanced budget and operate with no significant increases in taxes or fees. The revenues from some of the transfers are budgeted to be allocated in various CIPs in the General Fund in order to provide more long-term stability for those plans.

Expenditures by Category

The North Carolina Local Government Commission (LGC) collects, mantains and compares financial data from all municipal governments in North Carolina.* For comparison purposes, they group towns by population. This prevents small towns, such as River Bend, from being compared to large towns, such as Raleigh and Charlotte. They also separate towns that own electrical distribution systems, from those that do not own electrical distribution systems. We fall into the 2,500-9,999 population group that do not operate an electrical distribution system. There are 129 towns in our reporting group. In addition to lots of other data, the LGC compares the per capita expenditure for six functions for each town. Those six functions are: Public Safety, Transportation, General Government, Utility, Debt Service and Other. The 2025 data, (the most recent data from the LGC) is shown in the chart below. More LGC data begins on page 32.

Function	Average Per Capita Expenditure of Group	River Bend Per Capita Expenditure
Utility	$517	$354
Debt Service	$136	$88
Transportation	$167	$81
General Government	$329	$220
Public Safety	$608	$290
Other	$435	$183
Total	$2,192	$1,216



One of the largest expenditures for River Bend and for most localities is the cost of personnel. We have 21 full-time employees and 3 part-time positions, or 22.5 full-time equivalents (FTE). Our total personnel costs account for 47% of the combined operating budgets of the General and Enterprise Funds. This chart shows the number of FTE employees working in each department. It does not, however, show the allocation of labor between the General Fund and Enterprise Funds that we use to account for work done outside of an employee's primary department. We use allocations in order to arrive at a more accurate cost of providing certain services and these allocations were examined as this budget was prepared. A detailed allocation table was provided during the budget workshops.

Through operational efficiencies in the utilization of personnel, leveraging technology to mitigate staffing increases, receiving many hours of volunteer assistance, and other management strategies, we are able to maintain a staffing profile below that of comparable localities. In fact, according to 2025 data from the North Carolina Local Government Commission, River Bend's per capita expenditure for salaries and wages was $453, which is $133 less than the average of our peer group, which was $586.

This budget, following the guidance of the Council, through their continued support of our compensation plan, includes a 2.2% cost of living allowance and a 1% longevity increase, both are only for eligible employees in accordance with the plan. An additional merit pool is available to be used to recognize outstanding performance of individual employees.

Sources of Revenue

Excluding fund balance appropriation, General Fund revenues are budgeted at $2,696,404. Fund Balance appropriation in the General Fund for FY 26-27 is $298,996 which is a increase of 45% vs. last year's budgeted amount of $205,880.

The General Fund receives revenue from several sources, the largest of which is Ad Valorem taxes. Ad Valorem, from the Latin phrase meaning "according to value," is levied upon the property, and measured by the value of the property, not the owner's ability to pay. While important, Ad Valorem tax revenue is forecast to generate $1,407,048 or only 47% of the revenue for our General Fund in FY27. Of that amount, $153,000 is attributable to taxes on motor vehicles. That means that more than half of the services that we provide in the General Fund are paid for with sources other than local property tax revenue. State law limits the rate a locality may charge for this tax to $1.50 per $100 of valuation. Currently, the North Carolina General Assembly is considering legislation which would impose restrictions on a municipality's ability to raise their tax rate. Our proposed tax rate is 30¢, which is a 2¢ increase. The property value is expected to increase by nearly $7,000,000 vs. last year, which generates about $21,000 in additional tax revenue.

According to the North Carolina Local Government Commission, the average tax rate among municipal governments in our group for Fiscal Year 2024, (the latest available data) was $0.3058 per hundred. At that time, our tax rate was $0.24 per hundred. The range was $0.0275 to $0.89 per hundred. River Bend contracts with the Craven County tax office to collect our taxes. This enables our residents to receive one tax bill and remit payment to one place. It also allows us to enjoy an excellent collection rate for real and personal property taxes. In FY 26-27, we budgeted for a collection rate of 99.67%.

The next largest source of revenue comes from our share of the sales tax that we all pay. Local sales tax revenue increased moderately during FY26. We expect that trend to continue in FY27. These are essentially two tax types: the Sales Tax on the retail sale or lease of tangible personal property, services, the rental of hotel rooms, and the Use Tax, which is an excise tax on the right to use or consume property in North Carolina or elsewhere. All taxes are pooled by the State and shared, in accordance with statutory

formulas, by all 100 counties. Each county, in turn, shares their portion of the sales tax proceeds with the incorporated cities and towns in that county.

In addition to sales tax revenue, the Town also receives revenue from the State reflecting our statutory portion of tax revenues from telecommunication services, video programming, beer and wine sales, and others. With the exception of funding received under the terms of the Powell Bill, State revenues can be used for any legitimate government function. Powell Bill funding, by law, is restricted for uses related to the maintenance of streets. Historically, River Bend uses 100% of this funding to continue to follow our Roadway Evaluation Survey.

Fund Balance

The North Carolina Local Government Commission (LGC) monitors the level of fund balance each unit maintains as a sign of their relative financial strength. Sufficient fund balance is essential to ensure a unit of local government has ample funds to respond to emergencies and opportunities. While not official, the historical benchmark for fund balance that many units recognize as the minimum is 8% of total expenditures. If a unit approaches that level, the LGC may express concern to the unit and direct action to increase the balance. Our audit shows we ended FY25 with a fund balance of $1,475,445 or approximately 66%. The policy set by the Town Council is to maintain a fund balance of at least 50% of total expenditures. Our unaudited projection for fund balance at the end of FY26 is 56%. According to June 30, 2024 LGC data (the latest available data) the average fund balance for our peer group (Those with General Fund Expenditures of $1,000,000-$9,999,999) was $4,017,422, or 101.42%. The fund balance for River Bend for that same period was $1,334,306 or 65.72%. I believe the dollar amount of fund balance is more important than the percentage of fund balance. I often say, “Percentages do not pay the bills, dollars do.” Also, the average tax rate for this group was 30.58¢. At that time our tax rate was 24¢. There were 171 towns in this group. Only 33 of those levied a lower tax rate than River Bend. The average population for the group was 3,466.

Enterprise Funds

In addition to the General Fund, covering all typical government operations, the Town of River Bend operates two enterprises: the water system and the sewer system. These two enterprises are operated as businesses by having all revenues and expenditures accounted for separately from other functions of the Town and by having rates established that cover all expenditures of the enterprise. River Bend purchased these two businesses from a private company, Carolina Water Service, in 1995. As a result of this purchase, a significant portion of the revenue we receive is dedicated to cover the debt incurred and amortized with annual payments which will end in FY27 with this budget.

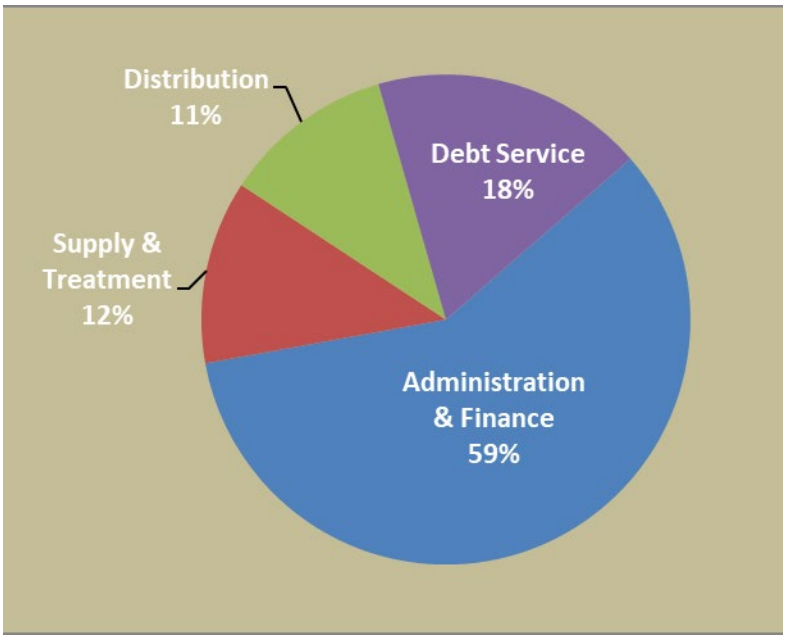
In FY 2013, we refinanced the debt in order to take advantage of interest rates that were more favorable than we had in our prior debt structure. The result of this effort was a

savings of nearly $300,000 over the remaining life of the debt. Following a 2021 review, our Standard & Poor's rating was AA+. Following a 2023 review, our Moody's rating was Aa3. Both ratings remain the same today. These ratings are further evidence of good financial performance.

Water Enterprise Expenditures

Expenditures in the Water Fund are divided according to function. There are costs specifically associated with supply and treatment (taking the water from the ground and treating it to make it safe to drink) and costs associated with distributing it to the customer. Other costs, in the administration and finance area, include personnel, vehicles, office rent, utilities, and bond debt service.

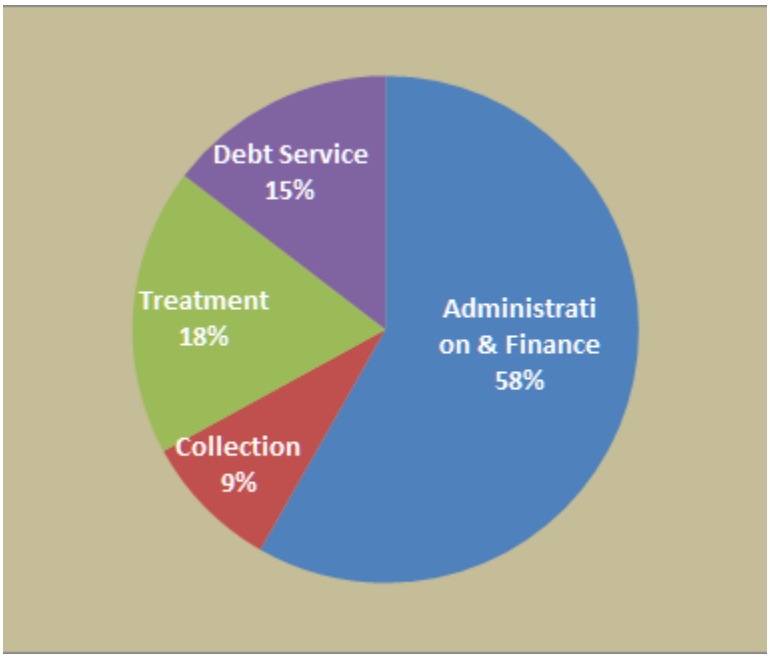
As noted earlier, debt service is a large expenditure for this enterprise and is divided from the Administration and Finance department in the chart to illustrate its proportion to overall expenditures. The total budgeted expenditure for the water enterprise in FY26-27 is $744,500, an increase of $31,700 or 4.4% from the current, as amended, fiscal year budget. The graph to the right shows the percentage of the expenditures that each department represents within the Water Fund.



The chart below shows the comparison of the current budget vs. the proposed budget.

Water	25-26	26-27	Change v. prior year	
	Budget	Proposed	%	$
Administration & Finance	530,625	550,700	3.78%	20,075
Supply & Treatment	101,500	87,000	-14.29%	-14,500
Distribution	60,175	81,300	35.11%	21,125
Transfer to Capital Reserve Fund	20,500	25,500	24.39%	5,000
TOTAL (including CIP)	712,800	744,500	4.45%	31,700

Sewer Enterprise Expenditures



Similar to water expenditures, those for the sewer enterprise are also divided according to function. Costs specifically associated with collection (pipes and lift stations) are separated from those associated with operating the wastewater treatment plant. Other costs, in the administration and finance area, include personnel, vehicles, office rent, utilities, and bond debt. As noted earlier, debt service is a large expenditure for this enterprise and is divided from the Administration and Finance department in the chart to illustrate its proportion to overall expenditures. The total budgeted expenditure for the sewer enterprise in FY26-27 is $802,700, a $14,150 or 1.79% increase from the current, as amended, fiscal year. The graph above shows the percentage of the expenditures that each department represents within the Sewer Fund.

The chart below shows the comparison of the current budget vs. the proposed budget.

Sewer	25-26	26-27	Change v. prior year	
	Budget	Proposed	%	$
Administration & Finance	533,650	559,000	4.75%	25,350
Collection	88,100	67,400	-23.50%	-20,700
Treatment	141,300	140,800	-0.35%	-500
Transfer to Capital Reserve Fund	25,500	35,500	39.22%	10,000
TOTAL (including CIP)	788,550	802,700	1.79%	14,150

Enterprise Fund Revenue

The budget for these two enterprises received attention in our budget workshop sessions with proposed revenues for current and future years being scrutinized in light of anticipated expenditures. We are fortunate to have a professionally designed rate model for each utility so the impact of the proposed expenditures can be compared to revenue at various rate levels. Based upon the proposed expenditures, proposed revenues from user fees and cash balance, the water utility rates will not change for FY 26-27. Likewise, both

current and future revenues and expenditures for sewer were considered during the budget work sessions. The sewer utility rates will not change in FY 26-27. Projections indicate that the current rate structure, combined with conservative expenditures, will allow both utilities to maintain a reasonably adequate level of reserves to respond to emergent needs if they arise during the year and through FY30-31. The cash balance in both funds was substantially reduced in FY 23 due to each fund contributing $515,879 to fund their portion of the cost of the new Public Works Building. Due to that project being completed under budget, part of that funding was returned to both funds. Each year, the Council looks at current and long-range needs of both systems. Next year, the Council will review the funds and consider any necessary changes to keep the funds sound.

Conclusion

It is important to concentrate our annual budgeting efforts on maintaining current levels of services and maintenance of Town-owned property and infrastructure, while attempting to maintain a low tax rate and avoid substantial increase in fees and look for ways to expand amenities when possible. In my opinion, the budget being presented for your consideration accomplishes those goals. Each year we are faced with different challenges and opportunities. This year, inflation and the war in Iran are having substantial impacts on our national, state and local economies and budgets. A considerable amount of discussion was devoted to the difficulty of predicting such effects on the town's FY 26-27 budget. Also, this year, the North Carolina General Assembly is advancing legislation which could result in future restrictions on the ability of local governments to increase their tax rate.

Maintaining our critical infrastructure and essential services comes at a cost, and River Bend, like towns throughout the State, must manage in a fiscal climate marked with a still uncertain economy. Town Council members should accept their responsibility with great conviction and sincerity and strive to be well-informed and engaged as they exercise their legislative role in the operation of this government. This budget reflects the Council's commitment to maintaining and improving this community and positioning it to be financially sound in the future. I believe it to be worthy of your consideration and approval.

I thank the Mayor, Town Council, and Town staff for their commitment to and participation in this budget process. I want to recognize the considerable contributions of Mandy Gilbert, our Finance Director, in the development of this year's budget. However, every member of the staff at Town Hall, along with the Department Heads, contributed in some degree to the budget development process. This annual budget represents a true team effort as we all work to preserve the future of this great community. The legally required Public Hearing for the Proposed FY 26-27 Town Budget is scheduled for June 11 at 5 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Delane Jackson

Delane Jackson,
Town Manager

Proposed Annual Budget Ordinance

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the Town of River Bend, North Carolina that the following anticipated fund revenues and departmental expenditures, together with certain fees and schedules, and with certain restrictions and authorizations, are hereby appropriated and approved for the operation of the Town government and its activities for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2027:

Summary

General Fund	2,995,400
General Capital Reserve Fund	229,425
Law Enforcement Separation Allowance Fund	1,100
Water Fund	744,500
Water Capital Reserve Fund	25,850
Sewer Fund	802,700
Sewer Capital Reserve Fund	36,250
Total	4,835,225

Section 1. General Fund

Anticipated Revenues

AD VALOREM Taxes 2026-2027	1,254,048
AD VALOREM Taxes-Motor Vehicle	153,000
Vehicle Registration Fee	30,800
Animal Licenses	1,500
Sales Tax 1% Article 39	242,305
Sales Tax 1/2% Article 40	143,922
Sales Tax 1/2% Article 42	120,990
Sales Tax Article 44	17,861
Sales Tax Hold Harmless Distribution	135,612
Solid Waste Disposal Tax	2,200
Powell Bill Allocation	108,000
Beer and Wine Tax	13,625
Video Programming Sales Tax	39,333
Utilities Franchise Tax	134,899
Telecommunications Sales Tax	6,803
Court Refunds	500
Zoning Permits	5,000
Miscellaneous	9,000
Interest-Powell Bill Investments	5
Interest-General Fund Investments	40,784
Contributions	900
Wildwood Storage Rents	17,395
Rents & Concessions	18,000
Sales Tax	11,365
Sale of Capital Assets	12,057
Transfer from Capital Reserve Fund	176,500
Appropriated Fund Balance	298,996
Total	2,995,400

Authorized Expenditures

Governing Body	72,500
Administration	411,800
Finance	165,900
Tax Listing	25,600
Legal Services	42,000
Elections	700
Police	885,900
Public Buildings	74,000
Emergency Services	5,400
Street Maintenance	324,700
Public Works	298,500
Leaf & Limb and Solid Waste	98,200
Stormwater Management	94,500
Wetlands and Waterways	3,000
Planning & Zoning	64,700
Recreation & Special Events	15,200
Parks & Community Appearance	160,500
Contingency	27,400
Transfer to General Capital Reserve Fund	224,900
Transfer to L.E.S.A. Fund	0
Total	2,995,400

Section 2. General Capital Reserve Fund

Anticipated Revenues

Contributions from General Fund	224,900
Interest Revenue	4,525
Total	229,425

Authorized Expenditures

Transfer to General Fund	176,500
Future Procurement	52,925
Total	229,425

Section 3. Law Enforcement Separation Allowance Fund

Anticipated Revenues:

Contributions from General Fund	0
Interest Revenue	1,100
Total	1,100

Authorized Expenditures:

Separation Allowance	0
Future LEOSSA Payments	1,100
Total	1,100

Section 4. Water Fund

Anticipated Revenues

Utility Usage Charges, Classes 1 & 2	197,293
Utility Usage Charges, Classes 3 & 4	20,555
Utility Usage Charges, Class 5	11,702
Utility Usage Charges, Class 8	4,963
Utility Customer Base Charges	283,901
Availability Fee	17,751
Taps & Connections Fees	2,500
Nonpayment Fees	10,500
Late Payment Fees	7,775
Interest Revenue	14,360
Sales Tax	4,500
Sale of Capital Asset	0
Transfer from Capital Reserve Fund	25,000
Appropriated Fund Balance	143,700
Total	744,500

Authorized Expenditures

Administration & Finance *[1]*	550,700
Operations and Maintenance	168,300
Transfer to Fund Balance for Capital Outlay	0
Transfer to Water Capital Reserve Fund	25,500
Total	744,500
[1] Portion of department for bond debt service:	*129,888*

Section 5. Water Capital Reserve Fund

Anticipated Revenues

Contributions from Water Operations Fund	25,500
Interest Revenue	350
Appropriated Fund Balance	0
Total	25,850

Authorized Expenditures

Transfer to Water Operations Fund	25,000
Future Expansion & Debt Service	850
Total	25,850

Section 6. Sewer Fund

Anticipated Revenues:

Utility Usage Charges, Classes 1 & 2	252,284
Utility Usage Charges, Classes 3 & 4	36,577
Utility Usage Charges, Class 5	28,839
Utility Usage Charges, Class 8	9,812
Utility Customer Base Charges	299,115
Taps & Connection Fees	1,250
Late Payment Fees	8,146
Interest Revenue	23,985
Sales Tax	3,992
Sale of Capital Asset	0
Transfer from Sewer Capital Reserve	17,000
Appropriated Fund Balance	121,700
Total	802,700

Authorized Expenditures:

Administration & Finance *[2]*	559,000
Operations and Maintenance	208,200
Transfer to Fund Balance for Capital Outlay	0
Transfer to Sewer Capital Reserve Fund	35,500
Total	802,700
[2] Portion of department for bond debt service:	*112,162*

Section 7. Sewer Capital Reserve

Anticipated Revenues:

Contribution from Sewer Operations Fund	35,500
Interest Revenue	750
Total	36,250

Authorized Expenditures:

Transfer to Sewer Operations Fund	17,000
Future Expansion & Debt Service	19,250
Total	36,250

Section 8. Levy of Taxes

There is hereby levied a tax at the rate of thirty cents ($0.30) per one hundred dollars ($100) valuation of property as listed for taxes as of January 1, 2026, for the purpose of raising the revenue listed "Ad Valorem Taxes 2026-2027" in the General Fund Section 1 of this ordinance. This rate is based on a valuation of $419,400,000 for purposes of taxation of real and personal property with an estimated rate of collection of 99.67%. The estimated collection rate is based on the fiscal year 2024-2025 collection rate of 99.67% by Craven County who has been contracted to collect property taxes for the Town of River Bend. Also included in this rate is a valuation of $51,000,000 for purposes of taxation of motor vehicles with a collection rate of 100% by the North Carolina Vehicle Tax System.

Section 9. Fees and Charges

There is hereby established, for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 various fees and charges as contained in Attachment A of this document.

Section 10. Special Authorization of the Budget Officer

A. The Budget Officer shall be authorized to reallocate any appropriations within departments.

B. The Budget Officer shall be authorized to execute interfund and interdepartmental transfers in emergency situations. Notification of all such transfers shall be made to the Town Council at its next meeting following the transfer.

C. The Budget Officer shall be authorized to execute interdepartmental transfers in the same fund, including contingency appropriations, not to exceed $5,000. Notification of all such transfers shall be made to the Town Council at its next meeting following the transfer.

Section 11. Classification and Pay Plan

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for all Town employees shall be 2.2% and shall begin the first payroll in the new fiscal year.

The Town Manager is hereby authorized to grant merit increases to Town employees, when earned, according to the approved Pay Plan.

Section 12. Utilization of the Budget Ordinance

This ordinance shall be the basis of the financial plan for the Town of River Bend municipal government during the 2026-2027 fiscal year. The Budget Officer shall administer the Annual Operating Budget and shall ensure the operating staff and officials are provided with guidance and sufficient details to implement their appropriate portion of the budget.

Section 13. Copies of this Budget Ordinance

Copies of this Budget Ordinance shall be furnished to the Clerk, Town Council, Budget Officer, and Finance Officer to be kept on file by them for their direction in the disbursement of funds.

Adopted this 18th day of June, 2026.

_____
Mark Bledsoe, Mayor

Attest:

_____
Kristie J. Nobles, Town Clerk

Town of River Bend
Schedule of Rates and Fees
(Attachment A to Budget Ordinance)
Effective July 1, 2026

Amounts due are based upon the Fees and Charges Schedule in effect at the time of payment. It is the Town Council's intention that the Fees and Charges Schedule be revised as needed by July 1st of each year. Some fees and charges may be adjusted during the year as circumstances change.

GENERAL FUND

Administrative

Ad Valorem Tax	$.30 per $100 assessed valuation
Copies of Public Information	As specified by State Statute
Town Code, entire copy	$75.00
Meeting Rooms	As specified in Building Use Policy
Returned Check Processing Charge	$25, as allowed by G.S. §25-3-506
Administrative Fee for returned bank drafts	$25.00

Public Safety

Pet License Fee	$10.00
Golf Cart Registration Fee	$10.00
Vehicle Registration Fee	$10.00

Nuisance Abatement Administrative Fee

Cost of Abatement	Fee
$1 – 1,000	$50.00
$1,001 – and up	5% of total abatement cost (maximum fee $2,000)

Planning and Zoning

Special Exception Use Permit	$200 plus cost of required legal advertisement and postage to notify abutting landowners
Variance	$200 plus cost of required legal advertisement and postage to notify abutting landowners
Appeal to Board of Adjustment	$200 plus cost of required legal advertisement and postage to notify abutting landowners
Residential Application	Based on amount of project as follows:
Base Fee	$30
	$2 for every $1,000 of project value after first $1,000 and up to $100,000; plus, $1 for every $1,000 above $100,000 (All values rounded up to nearest $1,000)

Zoning Administrator can use any appropriate means to verify project valuation.

Residential Flood Plain Application with Zoning Permit

40% of the fee for the Town's residential zoning permit and shall be additional to the zoning permit fee for enclosed structures (fences, decks, and other similar exempt from additional fee).

Commercial Application	Based on amount of project as follows:
Base Fee	$50
	$4 for every $1,000 of project value after first $1,000 and up to $100,000; plus, $2 for every $1,000 above $100,000 (All values rounded up to nearest $1,000)

Zoning Administrator can use any appropriate means to verify project valuation.

Commercial Flood Plain Application with Zoning Permit

40% of the fee for the Town's commercial zoning permit and shall be additional to the zoning permit fee for enclosed structures (fences, decks, and other similar exempt from additional fee).

Residential Flood Plain Application <u>without</u> Zoning Permit

Based on amount of project as follows:

Base Fee	$30
	$2 for every $1,000 of project value after first $1,000 and up to $100,000; plus, $1 for every $1,000 above $100,000 (All values rounded up to nearest $1,000)

Zoning Administrator can use any appropriate means to verify project valuation.

Commercial Flood Plain Application <u>without</u> Zoning Permit

Based on amount of project as follows:

Base Fee	$50
	$4 for every $1,000 of project value after first $1,000 and up to $100,000; plus, $2 for every $1,000 above $100,000 (All values rounded up to nearest $1,000)

Zoning Administrator can use any appropriate means to verify project valuation.

Engineering Review	Charged to applicant at the actual cost of the service as billed by the contracted engineer.
Zoning Amendment Request (Map or Text)	$200 plus cost of required legal advertisement and postage to notify abutting landowners
Sign Permit	$30
Tree Harvest Permit	$50
Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances	$25 per set

Wildwood Storage Rental Rates

Unit Number	Unit Size	Monthly Rent
BB 01	5x20	$35
BB 02	5x20	$35
BB 03	5x20	$35
BB 04	5x20	$35
BB 05	10x20	$75
BB 06	10x20	$75
BB 07	10x20	$75
BB 08	10x20	Town Occupied (TO)
BB 09	10x20	TO
BB 10	10x20	TO
BB 11	10x20	TO
BB 12	10x20	TO
GB 15	10x16	$65
GB 16	10x16	$65
GB 17	10x16	$65
GB 18	10x16	$65
GB 19	10x16	$65
GB 20	10x16	TO
GB 21	10x16	TO
GB 22	10x16	TO
OP	Open Spaces (40)	$25

Late Payment Charge	$10, assessed after the 10th of the month
Interest Charge	1.5% monthly on outstanding balances

ENTERPRISE FUNDS

Water and Sewer - Rates and Fees

	Water	Sewer
Class 1 and 2 – Residential (1)		
Customer Base Charge per month (2)	15.24	24.18
Usage per 1,000 gallons	-	9.30
Usage 0-4,000 gallons	4.22	-
Usage 4,001-20,000 gallons	4.50	-
Usage 20,001+ gallons	4.55	-
Initial Connection (Tap) charge (3)	1,250.00	1,250.00
Nonpayment Fee	70.00	-
Class 3 and 4 - Commercial		
Customer Base Charge per month (2)	88.32	141.99
Usage per 1,000 gallons	4.22	9.30
Initial Connection (Tap) charge (3)	3,500.00	1,250.00
Nonpayment Fee	100.00	-
Class 5 - Industrial		
Customer Base Charge per month (2)	276.24	444.93
Usage per 1,000 gallons	4.22	9.30
Initial Connection (Tap) charge (3)	5,000.00	1,250.00
Nonpayment Fee	200.00	-
Class 6 - Early Bird (No longer available)		
Class 7 - Availability Charge per month (2)	15.24	-
Class 8 - 1" Water Service		
Customer Base Charge per month (2)	30.90	49.43
Usage per 1,000 gallons	4.22	9.30
Initial Connection (Tap) charge (3)	1,500.00	1,250.00
Nonpayment Fee	100.00	-
Class 9 - Vacant /Out of Use Non-residential Property		
Customer Base Charge per month (2)	15.24	24.18
Usage per 1,000 gallons	4.22	9.30
Nonpayment Fee	70.00	-
Class 10 - Vacant Residences		
Customer Base Charge per month (2)	15.24	-
Nonpayment Fee	70.00	-

Special Charges

Service Call - 2 hour minimum	$35 per hour - signed by customer to initiate work outside of scheduled work hours of 7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. on weekdays and 7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. on weekends
Meter Testing Charge	$25 - no charge if meter defective
Returned Check Processing Charge	$25, as allowed by G.S. §25-3-506
Late Payment Charge	10% of amount overdue per month or part of month beginning 30 days after billing date
Irrigation Connection Inspection	$20

(1) Residential customer deposit may apply. Please refer to Water Resources Department Policy Manual.

(2) Base charges do not include any usage.

(3) The published Initial Connection (Tap) charges are based on the historic River Bend average cost that has been experienced in making connections. There will be cases when, because of the local depth of the service main pipe to which the connection is to be made, or other site-specific differences from the norm, the published connection fee will not cover the actual cost of the tap. When the Water Resources Superintendent encounters such conditions, he shall notify the applicant requesting the tap that the cost may exceed the published fee. In those cases, a record of cost associated with the specific tap will be accounted for and if the total cost exceeds the published fee, then the applicant shall pay a fee equal to the actual cost. Initial connection charges are based upon the size of the meter and charged as shown in the appropriate Class above.

(4) The necessary equipment will be provided to the resident at cost. The resident is responsible for installing the irrigation meter on the resident's side of the regular water meter. After installation, the work will be inspected by a Water Resources Department employee.

Budget "Snapshot"

What follows is a brief "snapshot" of the budgets of all three major funds. These are briefly explained in the Budget Message that precedes these pages and were discussed in detail during the budget sessions.

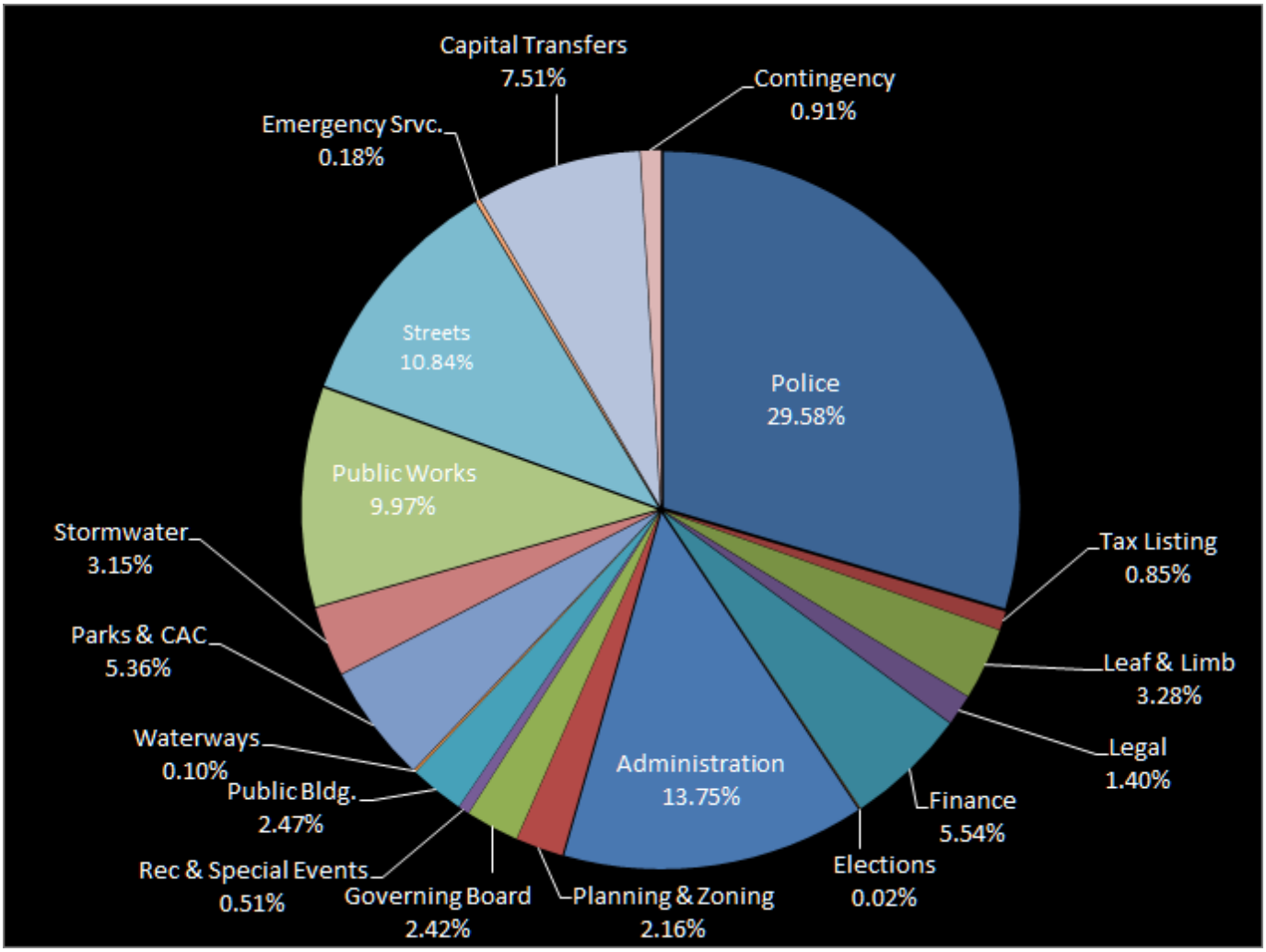
General Fund Expenditures

The chart shown below summarizes, by department, the actual, budgeted, projected, and proposed expenditures in the General Fund for the previous two completed fiscal years, the current fiscal year, and the budget under consideration for next year. This allows the reader to see how expenditures change in each of these departments over the course of several years.

	General Fund Expenditure Summary					Change v. prior year	
		23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27	%	$
Dept #	Department Name	Actual	Actual	Current Budget	Proposed		
4110	Governing Body*	25,980	61,178	81,200	72,500	-10.71%	-8,700
4120	Administration*	321,476	331,117	348,725	411,800	18.09%	63,075
4130	Finance*	134,093	143,417	161,290	165,900	2.86%	4,610
4140	Tax Listing	13,756	12,830	19,500	25,600	31.28%	6,100
4150	Legal Services*	33,373	22,755	34,000	42,000	23.53%	8,000
4170	Elections	-	491	-	700		700
4310	Police*	677,590	823,254	839,700	885,900	5.50%	46,200
4190	Public Buildings*	100,001	70,493	75,125	74,000	-1.50%	-1,125
4330	Emergency Services*	2,854	5,368	5,370	5,400	0.56%	30
4510	Street Maintenance*	236,435	237,132	317,675	324,700	2.21%	7,025
4560	Public Works*	185,670	215,724	290,325	298,500	2.82%	8,175
4710	Leaf & Limb and Solid Waste*	75,923	96,957	76,725	98,200	27.99%	21,475
4730	Stormwater Management*	39,122	48,892	88,300	94,500	7.02%	6,200
4760	Wetlands & Waterways*	737	899	3,025	3,000	-0.83%	-25
4910	Planning & Zoning*	52,942	56,527	72,315	64,700	-10.53%	-7,615
6120	Recreation & Special Events*	9,945	8,914	14,200	15,200	7.04%	1,000
6130	Parks & CAC*	50,386	45,293	76,000	160,500	111.18%	84,500
	Department Expenditure Total	1,975,356	2,201,149	2,531,295	2,743,100	8.37%	211,805
	Contingency (1% per policy)	20,807	23,043	25,156	27,400	8.92%	2,244
	Transfer to Capital Reserve	55,000	86,757	151,344	224,900	48.60%	73,556
	Transfer to Capital Project Fund	-	-	-	-		0
	* amended since adoption as of 04/09/2026						
	TOTAL	2,051,163	2,310,949	2,707,795	2,995,400	10.62%	287,605

The last two columns compare the proposed budget to the current year's budget.

This chart shows the percentage of funding that each department will receive of the total budget (including contingency and transfer) in the next fiscal year.



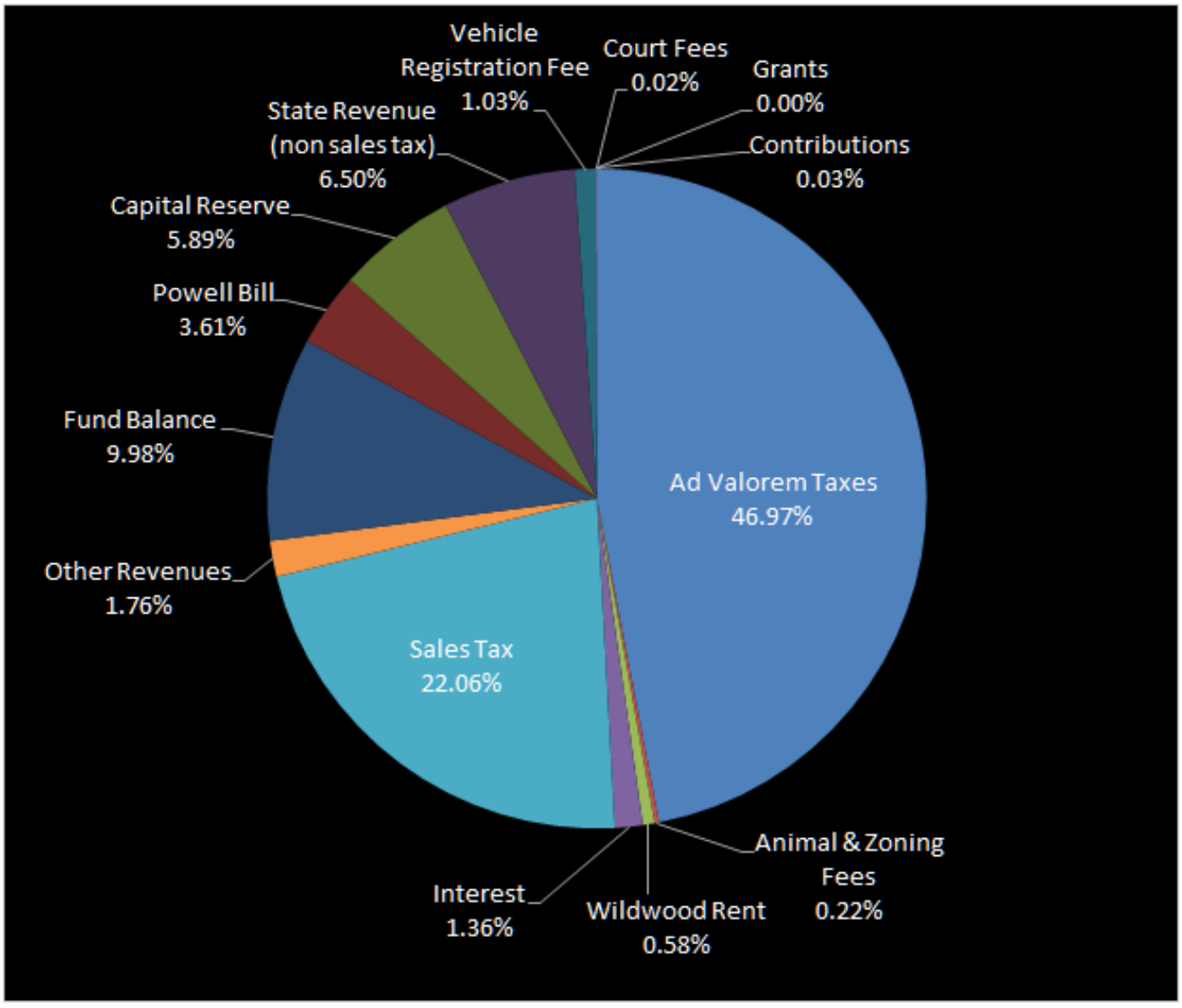
General Fund Revenue

The chart shown below summarizes the actual, budgeted, and projected revenue, by type, in the General Fund. Similar to the chart for expenditures, this worksheet gives the reader some historical perspective regarding the changes in sources of revenue.

General Fund Revenue Summary					Change v. prior year	
	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27	%	$
	Actual	Actual	Current Budget	Proposed		
Ad Valorem Taxes	1,100,557	1,109,696	1,293,846	1,407,048	8.75%	113,202
Animal Licenses & Zoning Permits	14,232	7,986	6,500	6,500	0.00%	0
Interest	55,787	52,823	45,864	40,789	-11.07%	-5,075
Wildwood Rents	19,649	19,574	18,144	17,395	-4.13%	-749
Other Revenue & Rents	69,084	35,548	52,565	52,622	0.11%	57
Contributions	640	668	900	900	0.00%	0
Powell Bill (includes appropriation)	102,235	109,097	109,000	108,000	-0.92%	-1,000
State Revenue (other than sales tax)	189,294	203,849	201,254	194,660	-3.28%	-6,594
Sales Tax Revenue	535,482	668,699	612,142	660,690	7.93%	48,548
NCORR Loan/Grant Proceeds	0	0	0	0		0
Government Grants (Fed, State & County)	525	7,294	0	0		0
Fees (court refund)	515	411	500	500	0.00%	0
Vehicle Registraion Fee	0	0	30,800	30,800	0.00%	0
Transfer from Capital Reserve	43,504	42,650	130,500	176,500	35.25%	46,000
Transfer from LESA Fund	0	0	0	0		0
Transfer from ARPA Fund	0	0	0	0		0
Transfer from PW Capital Proj Fund	57,720	0	0	0		0
Appropriated Fund Balance	0	0	205,880	298,996	45.23%	93,116
TOTAL	2,189,224	2,258,297	2,707,895	2,995,400	10.62%	287,505

The last two columns compare the proposed budget to the current year's budget.

This chart shows the percentage that each revenue type is anticipated to contribute to total General Fund revenue in the next fiscal year.

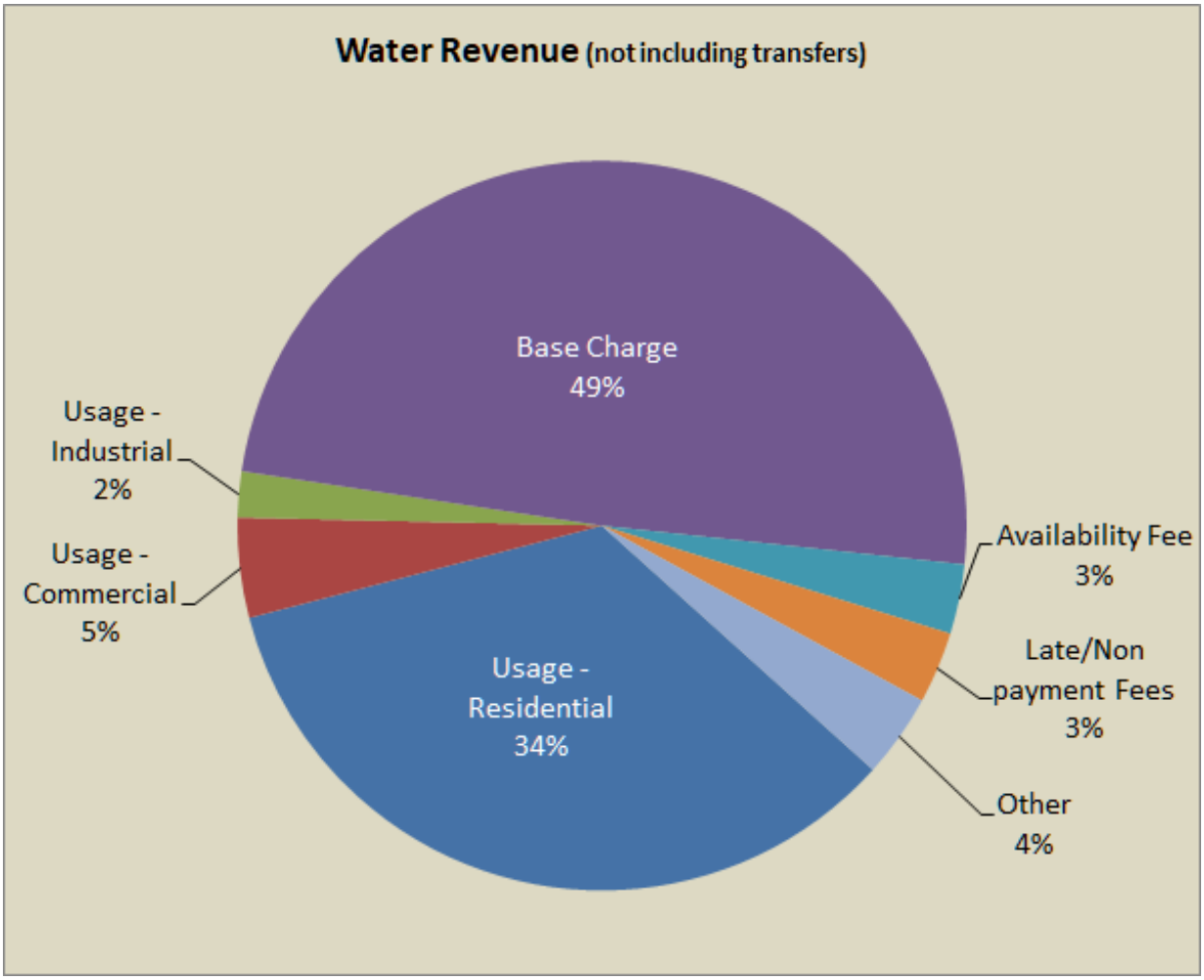


Water Fund Expenditures

The worksheet shown below summarizes the actual, budgeted, and projected expenditures, by department within the Water Enterprise Fund.

Water	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27	Change v. prior year	
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Proposed	%	$
Administration & Finance	490,108	515,009	530,625	550,700	3.78%	20,075
Supply & Treatment	48,992	117,454	101,500	87,000	-14.29%	-14,500
Distribution	60,815	42,851	60,175	81,300	35.11%	21,125
Transfer to Capital Reserve Fund	0	20,000	20,500	25,500	24.39%	5,000
TOTAL (including CIP)	599,915	695,313	712,800	744,500	4.45%	31,700

This chart shows the percentage each revenue type is anticipated to contribute to the total received by this enterprise in the next fiscal year.

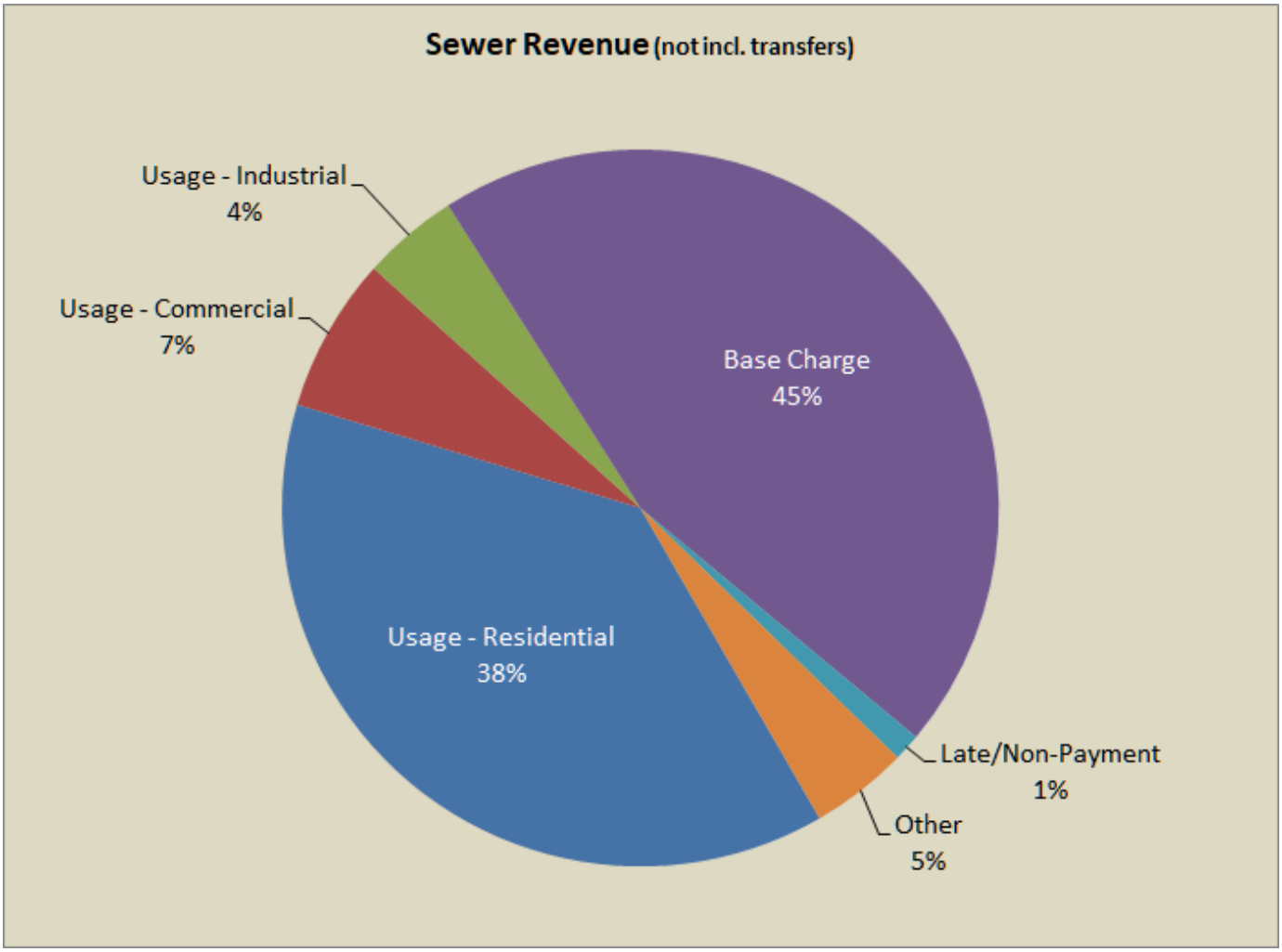


Sewer Fund Expenditures

The worksheet shown below summarizes the actual, budgeted, and projected expenditures, by department within the Sewer Enterprise Fund.

Sewer	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27	Change v. prior year	
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Proposed	%	$
Administration & Finance	481,228	511,617	533,650	559,000	4.75%	25,350
Collection	35,585	29,181	88,100	67,400	-23.50%	-20,700
Treatment	122,334	133,844	141,300	140,800	-0.35%	-500
Transfer to Capital Reserve Fund	0	25,000	25,500	35,500	39.22%	10,000
Transfer to Sewer AIA Grant Project	0	5,000	0	0	0.00%	0
TOTAL (including CIP)	639,147	704,643	788,550	802,700	1.79%	14,150

This chart shows the percentage each revenue type is anticipated to contribute to the total received by this enterprise in the next fiscal year.



What Will I Pay?

This table shows the real estate tax one would pay based upon the assessed value of their property.

To calculate your actual Town tax, multiply the total assessed value of your property by 0.0030. This will show what you pay for the General Fund services that the Town provides.

According to the Craven County Tax Department, the current (April, 2026) average assessed value of a home in River Bend is $247,519 (note highlighted data).

Assessed Value	Annual Bill at 0.30
95,000	$285
125,000	$375
247,519	$743
190,000	$570
200,000	$600
250,000	$750
300,000	$900
350,000	$1,050
400,000	$1,200
500,000	$1,500
600,000	$1,800

During the course of the budget workshops, the Council dedicated a considerable amount of discussion to the town's tax rate. The chart below was presented and discussed during the budget workshops. It shows the impact of the tax rate increase on the tax bill for various property values. The highlighted value respresents the average residential property value. It shows the tax rate increase will increase the tax bill on the average property by $49.50, which is less than $1.00 per week. For comparison, a $1,000,000 property will see a $200.00 increase in its tax bill, which is less than $4.00 per week.

5/14/2026

EFFECT OF TAX RATE CHANGE

Property Value	Tax Bill at $0.280	Tax Bill at $0.300	Change in bill
$100,000	$280.00	$300.00	$20.00
$180,283	$504.79	$540.85	$36.06
$247,519	$693.05	$742.56	$49.50
$300,000	$840.00	$900.00	$60.00
$400,000	$1,120.00	$1,200.00	$80.00
$500,000	$1,400.00	$1,500.00	$100.00
$600,000	$1,680.00	$1,800.00	$120.00
$1,000,000	$2,800.00	$3,000.00	$200.00

The following table shows water and sewer rates and their effect upon a residential customer using 3,000 gallons per month. The proposed rates represent no changes in the rates that are in effect as of today. The FY27 bugdet will replace the Hydrant Fee with an Availiability Fee. That change in terminolgy will not create an incease in fees. Essentially, it will only result in regular bi-monthy billing for previous hydrant customers. This change is necessary to give the town legal authority to collect delinquent accounts. Business, commercial, and industrial base rates and fees are different from the residential base rate and fees. In FY 25, the average water customer used 3,110 gallons of water per month.

Charges for 3,000 gallons per month			
		Current	Proposed
Water	Base	15.24	15.24
	Use	12.66	12.66
Sewer	Base	24.18	24.18
	Use	27.90	27.90
Monthly		**79.98**	**79.98**
Per-Bill		**159.96**	**159.96**
	Monthly Difference		**0.00**
	Per Bill Difference		**0.00**

Annual Costs	FY27	FY26	Change	%
Water/Sewer Fees (3,000 gal/month)	$ 960	$ 960	0	0.00%
Real Estate Tax ($247,519 home)	$ 743	$ 693	50	7.15%
TOTAL	$ 1,703	$ 1,653	50	3.00%
Average Per Day Cost for water/sewer/tax	$ 4.66	$ 4.53	$ 0.14	3.00%

The table above combines the cost of real estate taxes and the cost of water and sewer to show the total amount an average resident of River Bend would pay in a year for real estate taxes on a home valued at $247,519 and water and sewer fees for 3,000 gallons usage per month. For $4.66 per day, our average water and sewer user, living in our average valued home, receives potable water, wastewater treatment, 24/7 police protection, stormwater management, animal control, planning, zoning, code enforcement, parks, recreational events, street lights, street maintenance, leaf & limb removal, and a host of other services. Our goal is to continue to deliver high quality services at a reasonable price to all who make River Bend their home. At last year's rates, the cost was $4.53 per day. For the average resident, it will cost 14¢ more per day for these items in River Bend than it did last year. Inflation over the last year (April-April) was 3.8%. If our rate had only kept pace with inflation, the cost for these services in FY27 would have been $1,716.

Where are my tax dollars spent?

This table breaks down the proposed tax rate to show how much of that rate is needed to fund each of the functions in the General Fund. The total proposed tax rate is 30¢ per one hundred dollars of assessed value.
The figures shown represent the portion of the tax rate attributable to each department based on that department's percentage of the overall general fund budget. For example, the Police Department's budget represents 29.58% of the overall general fund budget in FY27. Therefore, 29.58% of the tax rate is equal to 8.873¢. It is important to note that property tax revenue represents only 47% of general fund revenues.

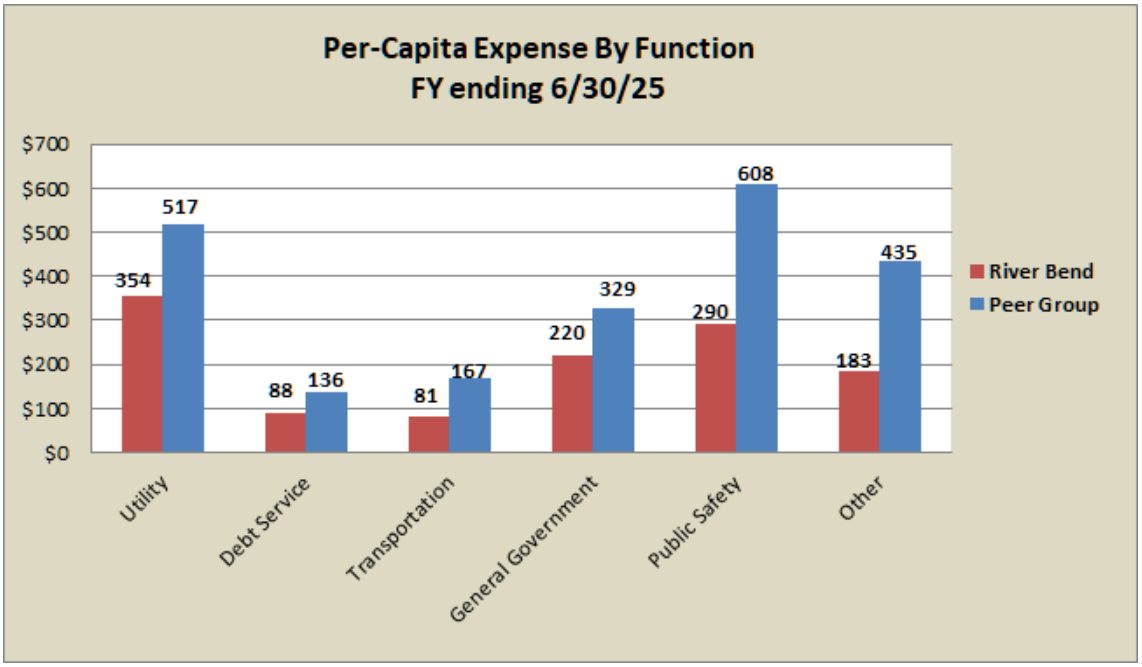
Department	Cents per Hundred
Governing Body	0.726
Administration	4.124
Finance	1.662
Tax Listing	0.256
Legal	0.421
Elections	0.007
Police	8.873
Public Buildings	0.741
Emergency Services	0.054
Animal Control	0.000
Street Maintenance	3.252
Public Works	2.990
Leaf and Limb/Solid Waste	0.984
Stormwater Management	0.946
Wetlands and Waterways	0.030
Planning and Zoning	0.648
Recreation and Special Events	0.152
Parks and CAC	1.607
Contingency	0.274
Transfer to Cap. Res.	2.252
Tax Rate	**0.30**

**North Carolina Local Government Commission –
Expenditure and Revenue Per Capita Data ***

The North Carolina Local Government Commission (LGC) compiles data based upon a required independent audit and other reports submitted to them for review and approval. This data is collected from all counties and municipalities in the State and is reported by locality and offers comparisons for per capita expenditures and revenue with other similar localities. The following charts reflect the latest LCG data, which is as of June 30, 2025.

To make the comparisons fair, the LGC divides all municipalities into groups by population, and they further divide them into groups that do and do not operate their own electric system. The population groups are: 499 and below, 500-999, 1,000-2,499, 2,500-9,999, 10,000-49,999 and 50,000+. There are 550 municipalities in North Carolina. There are 478 units that do not operate electric systems and 72 that do operate electric systems.

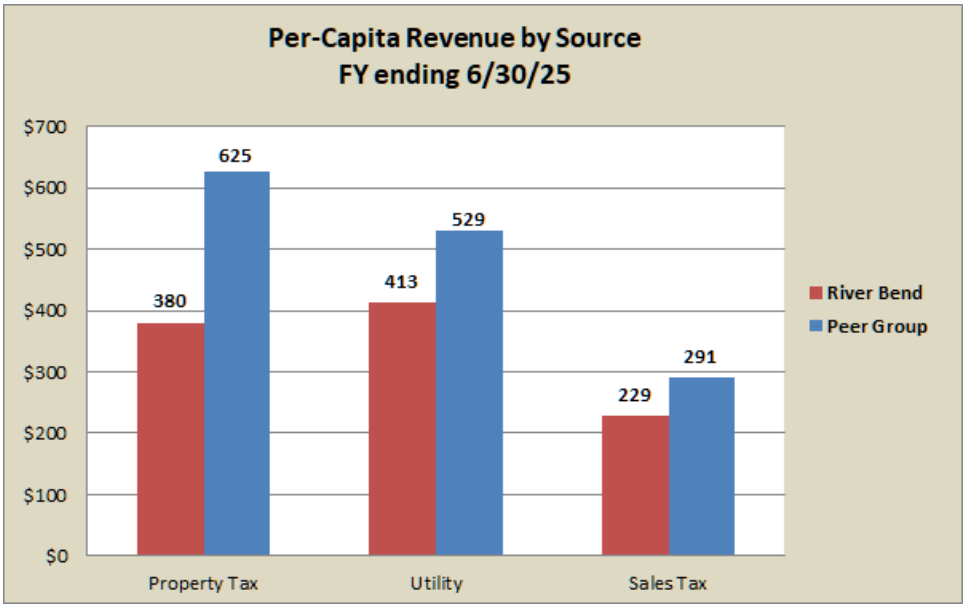
Our peer group is localities with a population between 2,500 and 9,999 residents that do not operate an electric utility. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, there were 129 localities in our peer group.



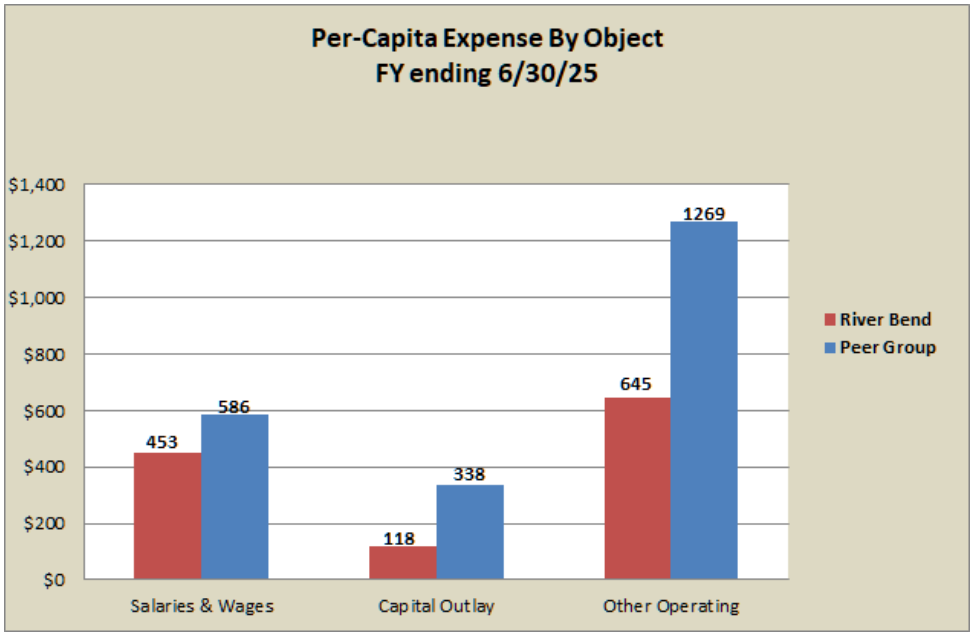
Data from the LGC shows that River Bend's per-capita expenditures in 2025 were $1,216 (down $254 from the previous year) compared to $2,192 (up $202 from the previous year) for localities in our peer group. The chart above shows some of the significant expenditures by function and how our expenditures compare with those of our peers. The reader will note that River Bend spent $976 less per capita overall, and spent less in all 6 categories, compared to our peer group.

Data from the LGC also indicates how we compared with our peer group in fiscal year 2025 in terms of per-capita revenue. The data shows that our total per-capita revenue was $1,442 compared to $2,537 for our peers. This means that River Bend residents paid $1,095 less than residents in our peer group.

This chart shows 3 of the 7 major revenue categories and how we compared with our peers in each. The reader will note that in all 3 categories our revenue is lower than that of our peers. Our property tax revenue amount was $245 less per capita than our peer group. Our utility revenue was $116 less per capita than our peer group.

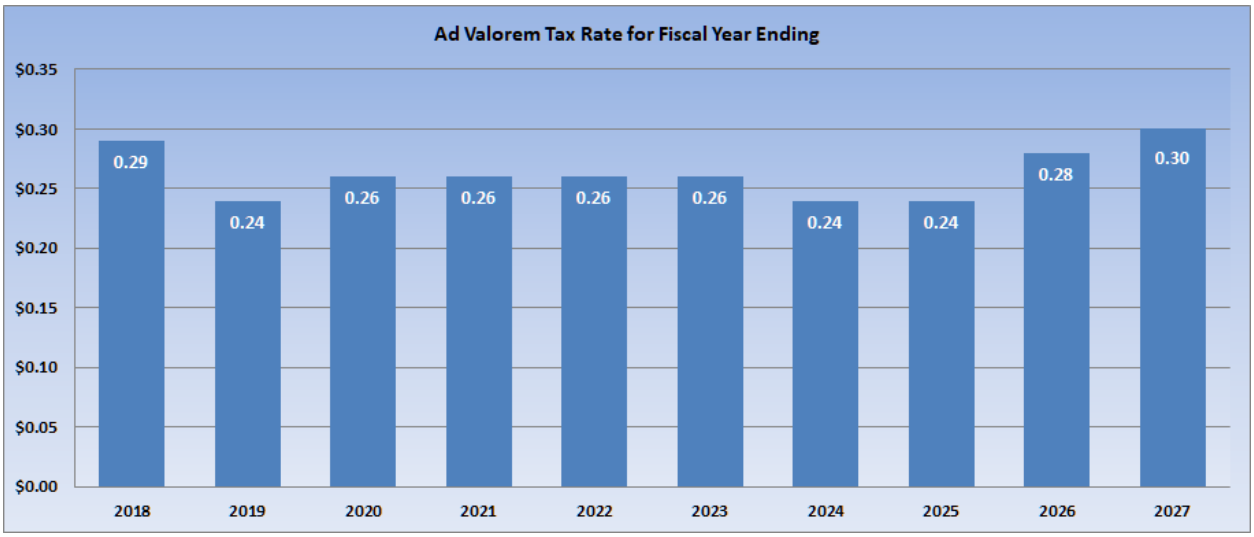


This chart shows 3 major expense categories and how we compared with our peers. The reader will note that we spent less per capita in all 3 categories, compared to our peer group. Typically, we spend less in all three. Overall, we spent $977 less per capita than our peer group.



** The LGC data contained in this document was found at nctreasurer.gov in the Management of Cash and Taxes and Fund Balance Available Report and/or the Annual Financial Information Reports (AFIR) and reflects data that was published as of May 21, 2026.*

Tax Rate History
The chart below shows the 10-year history of the tax rate for the Town of River Bend, including the proposed rate of 30¢ per $100 of assessed value for FY 26-27.



Budget and Finance Recognition

The Town Council realizes that the budget preparation process is likely the most important aspects of operating a municipal government. The budget sets the priorities for not only the next fiscal year but also for future years as well. A considerable amount of planning goes into the annual budget preparation process. After the budget has been approved by the Council, it is handed over to the Town Manager for implementation. Maintaining budget compliance is a year-long responsibility. During the fiscal year, the Council is updated at least monthly on the financial condition of the Town. The Council is ultimately responsible for the financial condition of the Town and takes that responsibility very seriously. The Town of River Bend has often been recognized for its budget preparation, financial reporting and transparency. Some of those recognitions are listed below:

Excellence in Accounting and Financial Management- from the NC State Treasurer 2010

Distinguished Budget Presentation Award- from the Government Finance Officers Association. We received 12 in a row from fiscal year beginning 2010-2021.

Excellence in Financial Reporting Award- from the Government Finance Officers Association. We recently received our 14th in a row for fiscal year ending 2024. We have applied for and expect to receive our 15th award for fiscal year ending 2025 soon.