

**River Bend Town Council
Budget Workshop Minutes
May 11, 2026
River Bend Town Hall
4:00 P.M.**

Present Council Members: Mayor Mark Bledsoe
Brian Leonard
Kathy Noonan
Buddy Sheffield
Jeff Weaver

Absent Council Member: Lisa Benton

Town Manager: Delane Jackson
Finance Director: Mandy Gilbert
Public Works Director: Brandon Mills

Members of the Public Present: 1

The Mayor called the meeting back to order at 4:00 p.m. and recognized the Town Manager. The Manager began by stating that since there were no additional items to discuss, they would follow the previously presented agenda for the budget workshop. All agreed.

The Manager stated that Public Works Director Brandon Mills was present to answer any questions related to water or sewer operations. The Manager stated that a few things had changed since the last meeting related to medical and property insurance costs. He suggested that he come back to those items after the enterprise fund proposals had been presented. All agreed.

The Manager then discussed the proposed budgets for the enterprise funds. The Manager followed the advertised agenda and presented details related to water and sewer funds cash levels, all water and sewer fund departments, water and sewer capital improvement plans, the utility rate model and revenues for the water and sewer funds. The Manager noted the need to change language in our fee schedule and change the "hydrant fee" to "availability fee" thus allowing the town legal authority to collect unpaid fees. He also noted that the change would include no change in cost to customers. All agreed. Brandon Mills answered questions from Council along the way. Councilman Sheffield asked Brandon his opinion of how the water treatment process was going. Brandon replied that it was going well and that there had been some positive feedback from the public to support that. He also stated that once the pilot study treatment process was approved by the state, it would reduce the cost of treatment and the required manpower to operate the system.

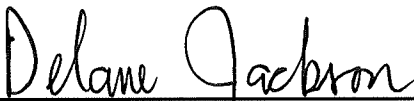
The Manager presented slides from the water and sewer rate model and stated that his proposal contained no changes to the rates. He showed what impact the future projections had on the water and sewer cash reserves and said those reserves needed to be monitored closely over the next few years after the town's debt service was paid off. Everyone was satisfied with the rate model projections and agreed to no rate increases for FY26-27.

With no further questions or comments about the enterprise funds, the Manager began discussion on insurance costs. He stated that the renewal cost for medical insurance was a 26% increase

and the proposed budget only included funding for a 10% increase, thus creating a \$29,000 shortfall. He then stated that he had received another property insurance quote from the NC League of Municipalities which was \$24,000 less than what was budgeted for that item. He then stated that he had met with the medical insurance agent today and discussed options to lower the town's medical insurance costs. He informed the Council that the town's transitional plan status has ended and those plans were no longer available. He presented a printout to Council and went on to explain that the closest coverage now available was a gold-level plan and its cost was 26% more than the current coverage. He presented 2 silver-level plans and suggested that the town offer those coverages as no-cost options to employees and to offer 1 gold-level option to employees, but with the requirement that the employee must pay a portion of the premium. He suggested presenting these 3 options to employees and let them decide which plan was best for them. He stated that offering these 3 options, as presented, would keep the costs within the current budget and actually create a little surplus. All agreed to these plans for medical and property insurance coverage.

The Manager stated that the next budget session was basically dedicated to the tax rate and stated that there had been some questions about what to do in regard to the tax rate due to recent action by the General Assembly regarding the possibility of limiting towns' authority to set their tax rate. He also stated that the proposed budget did not include a tax rate change and if the Council was satisfied with that, there was no need to further discuss tax rates. Councilman Leonard stated that he thinks we should discuss it. Councilman Weaver said he also wanted to discuss the town's pay plan. There were no objections.

Councilman Weaver motioned to recess the meeting until May 14, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. The motion was unanimously approved. The meeting recessed at 5:06 p.m.



Delane Jackson, Town Manager