

Forsyth County Passes \$500 Million Budget With No Tax Increases

By Administrator
Tuesday, 15 June 2021 10:27 -

Forsyth County commissioners unanimously approved a \$500 million budget that lowers the property tax rate by 6.57 cent while maintaining services and investing in the community.

The budget lowers the tax rate to 67.78 cents per \$100 of property value, a significant reduction from the current 74.35 cent rate. This is due to the year's strong property tax revaluation, which increased the estimated revenue from each penny of property tax from \$3.7 million to \$4.2 million.

Education remains the county's largest service area in terms of expenditures, with 32 percent, or \$162.2 million, of the General Fund and budget. Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools receives 92 percent of those funds, including \$17.6 million for local teacher supplements from the ¼ cent county sales tax.

In addition to the funding approved by the Board in the FY22 budget, WS/FC Schools is expected to

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benefit from a mid-year increase of \$3 million in sales tax revenue based on continued sales tax growth in the current fiscal year.

Education bond projects, like building and renovating schools, also take up most of the general fund budget devoted to debt service.

New spending in the budget included \$1.2 million to improve Emergency Medical Services response time by adding new positions, reclassifying others

, and purchasing two new ambulances.

Public Health received

\$110,000 for a Neighborhood Equity Atlas that will map out inequality

in the county and measure change in these areas to highlight successful programs and guide the decision making process for county departments and other organizations.

The adopted budget also includes \$300,000 to finish the first floor buildout at Social Services that's part of its long

- term goal of streamlining intake and eligibility processes.

Forsyth Tech

received

\$169,028 for three

additional

security officers

Parks will be able to complete a greenway at Triad Park

based on additional funding provided by the Board of Commissioners. The Sheriff was provided \$100,000 for

an additional

intelligence specialist

for the

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Real Time Intelligence Center

. In addition to the Neighborhood Equity Atlas, Public Health received \$60,216 for a men's health coordinator

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additional resources were provided to Human Resources for marketing and recruitment,

while the Commissioners also funded

a citizen survey of county services,

a

contract for the

legislative services

,

and an

internship pr

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gram with two part

-time

positions in the

commissioners

and manager's office.

For county employees, the budget has a 1-4 percent merit increase, market rate adjustments for several positions, and will increase the county's minimum pay to \$9.86.

The budget includes special appropriations for local non-profits with several non-profits receiving

in

creases in funding, including Senior Services, Shepard's Center, Center

for

Creative Economy, Arts Council

and

Neigh

bors for Better Neighborhoods.

The Winston-Salem

Theater Alliance and a request from

The

Conservation Fund to help preserve the

historic

Shallow Ford site both received new funding.

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Other

special appropriations included

Kaleideum

, National Black Theatre Festival, HARRY Veterans Service

s, Experiment in Self-Reliance and Children's Law Center, along with the county's contribution to

TransAid

transportation for residents with disabilities.

The commissioners will take another look at special appropriation requests in the next few months when they consider how to allocate American Rescue Plan Act funding after they've received more guidance from the U.S. Treasury Department.

This will include several

requests

that didn't receive funding in the

adopted

budget.

County staff will also be developing and coordinating a process to accept new proposals for this funding.

Commissioners encourage applicants to focus on Qualified Census Tract with the hope that 80 percent of the funds available will reach the most marginalized populations.

The budget also set the tax rates for the volunteer fire departments serving the rural areas and the County-wide fire tax for the supplemental staffing program. The rate for the supplemental staffing program was reduced from

73

to

.39 cents per \$100 valuation due to the revaluation and the strong sales tax revenue.

All the commissioners praised the budget staff for their hard work in preparing the budget during this

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The final, approved budget, which goes into effect on July 1, will be available online by the end of the month.