

COUNTY OF YANCEY

FY 2023-2024

BUDGET MESSAGE



June 12, 2023

**Lynn Austin
Yancey County Manager**

YANCEY COUNTY BUDGET MESSAGE

FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024

*To the Yancey County Board of County Commissioners
and Citizens of Yancey County:*

In accordance with North Carolina General Statute 159-11, the Yancey County Fiscal Year 2023-2024 proposed budget is respectfully submitted for your review and consideration. The proposed budget sets forth a plan of operations for all County departments, programs, and capital projects for the coming year. This proposed budget is balanced in accordance with the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act with general fund revenues and expenditures each totaling \$31,305,162.

INTRODUCTION

This budget message will introduce the Yancey County Fiscal Year 2023-2024 proposed budget. The budgeting process begins in February of each year with management requesting proposed appropriation use plans from departments, agencies and other County-supported entities. This year the requests for County funding exceeded expected revenues by over \$3,358,462. Over the course of numerous work sessions, the County Commissioners and County staff have worked to develop a balanced budget in line with expected revenue. This document will show how the County plans to utilize its fiscal resources and will highlight the significant impacts to the County's budget.

For the past eleven years, Yancey County has been dedicated to three primary goals: restoration of the financial integrity of Yancey County; maintain essential public safety, health and human services; and make strategic investments to support economic prosperity. As we all know, the current economy has its challenges with employment, salaries, supply and demand that we all have to work around. While we have navigated these uncharted waters the Yancey County Commissioners have remained steadfast with their conservative budget efforts all while supporting good public services for our citizens. This budget reflects the positive involvement by department heads and agency leadership to allow the County to provide the resources necessary to accomplish these broad goals. County staff, from the department head to the line employee, is to be commended for accomplishing much with limited resources. As the County's financial standing has strengthened, careful and strategic improvements have been implemented to improve and enhance the working environment for the employees and the services provided to our citizens. I am pleased to present this budget that continues to provide the tools necessary for an effective and efficient government.

REVENUES

This budget provides a priority spending plan that attempts to minimize the tax burden on the County taxpayer. Yancey County has been rated the past several years by SmartAsset.com, a New York financial technology company, as one of the top five North Carolina places where taxpayers get the most “Bang for Their Buck.” This is very positive recognition from a national financial organization that is evidence to taxpayers that their County government leadership is operating this local government in a professional, businesslike manner.

The County’s primary sources of funding are property and sales taxes and state and federal grants. For Fiscal Year 2023-2024, management recommends that the property tax rate be maintained at the current rate of \$0.60 per \$100 of valuation. It is expected this rate will provide estimated total revenue of \$13,100,000 to the total general fund budget. The Yancey County Tax Department works diligently, but respectfully, with taxpayers to collect taxes owed to the County. Yancey County is ranked in the top half of North Carolina counties in collection of property taxes. The current property tax collection rate is 98.12 %, which puts Yancey County in the range with our County of our population size;

The sales tax for the County continues to be a steady and reliable source of revenue. A large percentage of sales tax is state-mandated to be distributed by the County to the Yancey County Board of Education for the provision of the public schools. Other revenue sources such as fees from building permits, deed filings, firearm permit fees and others are projected to be minor and they constitute only a small portion of the revenue for this budget. The remaining revenue sources include federal and state block grants for specific programs, primarily at the Department of Social Services, Senior Center and Transportation Department. As always, it is recommended that the Board continue to support property tax collection measures to ensure that outstanding tax revenue is collected.

MAJOR INITIATIVES AND EXPENDITURES

Yancey County is dedicated to sound fiscal management, capital planning and responsible day-to-day operations. Accurate budget projections and a disciplined approach to budget administration have allowed the County to successfully address our three primary goals: maintain the financial integrity of Yancey County; maintain essential public safety, health and human services, and make strategic investments necessary to support economic prosperity. The budget is a comprehensive document that addresses the fiscal needs of some 40-plus county departments, affiliated county/regional agencies and non-profit organizations.

1). **Community Health and Wellbeing:** Yancey County Commissioners continue to strive for better healthcare here in Yancey County. In 2020 the Commissioners pulled the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) back in house after a 25 + year contract with Mission and later HCA. Then in 2022 the Commissioners wanted to make sure our Public Health is as strong as it could be. To ensure this it meant pulling back from the Toe River Health District after 25 + years. This brought the Yancey County Health Department back under the direction of Yancey County Commissioners and Board of Health. The Yancey County Health Department's future looks bright! This is an exciting time, we look forward to adding services locally and eliminating as much of the out of county travel as possible. The dedication of the Commissioners to Healthcare has been steadfast over the last 4.5 years. After all, a Healthy community is a vibrant community.

2.). **Public Schools and Education:** Yancey County Schools continue to do great things to improve educational performance among our students. Yancey County students perform extremely well on all statewide measurement factors. The Yancey County Commissioners are aware that many different situations may arise during this 2023-2024 school year and funds will need to be moved accordingly. The Yancey County Commissioners have allotted \$3,468,872 of the County's budget to the Yancey County School System to be used according to the need of the Yancey County School System. The Commissioners will continue to give the \$30,000 to the Teachers for classroom supplies to help offset some of the out of pocket expense that the teachers incur. Also, \$958,508 is set aside to pay the debt service payment for Blue Ridge Elementary School, \$730,000 for Yancey County School (YCS) capital projects and \$40, 000 in Timber sale money that is a pass along to the YCS. These funds are additional money and are not included in the allotted amount above. The overall amount of funds going to YCS either by allotment or pass through money is \$5,222, 380. Also, not included in the total amount above are the five School SRO officers. Yancey County Commissioners, Sheriff's Office and the Yancey County School Board are all dedicated to making sure the safety of our students is number one. The Sheriff's Office will continue to dedicate an officer at each school. These officers are hired and paid through the Sheriff's Office. The Yancey County Sheriff's Office will always have an officer on school grounds when school is in session.

3). **Mayland Community College** While primarily supported with state funds, Mayland Community College depends on all three counties: Yancey, Mitchell and Avery for operational expenses. Yancey County has historically funded the

community college at the level of the other partner counties. Mayland Community College operation costs are funded in this proposed budget with an appropriation of \$409,773 and a capital project of \$30,000 to repair/replace the HVAC system at the Yancey Campus.

4). **Solid Waste:** Yancey County bid out the landfill contract last fiscal year and was able to keep the cost as low as possible. One more cost saving measure was to bring in house the loading at the transfer station. The estimated savings is one million dollars over the next five years. For this 2023-2024 fiscal year, we have once again went out for bid out the Convenience Center site hauling and equipment to ensure the very best price is received. Solid waste is always going to be a big part of the budget and a ongoing issue to ensure prices are kept at a minimum.

5). **Yancey County Sheriff's Office:** The County is committed to continuing appropriations necessary for the Sheriff to provide for the safety and security of our community. The Sheriff manages several sections of the County budget. The Sheriff is responsible for the Sheriff's Department budget of \$2,069,968 which includes patrol and investigations, Sheriff Dispatch budget of \$839,843 County Detention Facility budget of \$1,643,060; County Grounds Security budget of \$630,972; and the "Non-Departmental Juvenile Inmate Confinement" budget of \$10,000. The total appropriated by this budget and managed by the Sheriff is \$5,193,983 which is approximately 16.5% of the total general fund budget.

6). **Yancey County Department of Social Services:** Social Services has continued to work in conjunction with state agencies to implement changes resulting from the termination of the COVID-19 pandemic Public Health Emergency. Our staff has been integral in the success and continued implementation of Medicaid Transformation for our residents. We are also preparing for the implementation of Medicaid Expansion, which is anticipated in the upcoming fiscal year. Agency staff is working diligently to make sure we have the additional equipment and staff to facilitate the enrollment and eligibility process. Agencies statewide are experiencing staffing shortages in human services. The agency in Yancey County is making diligent efforts in recruitment and retention and continues to provide quality care to our citizens in spite of staffing shortages. Yancey DSS is committed to maximizing allocated funds to provide services to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of the children and adults in our community.

10). **Capital Improvements:** Yancey County did receive the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant to finish the Ray Cort Park Project. This funding is to replace the building on site as well as renovate the parking lot area and the basketball court. This budget incorporates the match for the Part F Grant.

Also, this fiscal year the Yancey County Resource Center (will be home to the Farmers Market) Project will be complete. This budget has the money set aside from State Appropriations and Community Development Block Grant- COVID (CDBG-CV) grant funds. We look forward to this venue serving our citizens in many different ways and across many generations.

Also, this budget year the Sheriff's Office and Dispatch Center should be underway. The planning processes have already begun and should go out to bid late fall or early winter 23-24. This project is funded through State Grant and Appropriation funds.

Lastly, the new transportation facility will begin construction in the 23-24 fiscal year. This project should go out to bid this winter and construction be underway in the spring 2024.

The Yancey County Commissioners are looking forward to the construction of these projects and the ability to better serve the public for many years to come.

Budget Summary

This budget offers many opportunities for continued growth within Yancey County. We take on the responsibility and strive to make Yancey County be as financially sound as we can be all while keeping the best interest of our citizens at heart. This budget reaches the expectations set forth to accomplish those goals.

Respectfully submitted on this the 12th day of June 2023.

LYNN AUSTIN,
Yancey County Manager