



3 June 2025

To: Mayor Cameron Dockery and Robbins Board of Commissioners

From: Clint Mack, Robbins Town Manager

Subject: Annual FY25 Budget Message

I am pleased to present the Proposed Annual Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-26 for the Town of Robbins, in accordance with North Carolina state statutes 159-11. This document serves as a financial and operational roadmap, aligning with our strategic goals while maintaining a balanced, fiscally responsible approach while providing consistency throughout the Town's operational demands.

### **Budget Overview**

The proposed operating budget amounts to \$2,010,502.07 from the General Fund at a reduced tax rate of \$0.69 per \$100 of value and \$863,500.00 from the Enterprise Fund while maintaining current utility rates. This budget reflects our continuing commitment to delivering quality public services through employee retention, maintaining and offering our essential infrastructure capacity for economic growth, and maintaining overall financial health of our community for the future. The two most dramatic increases in operating costs are the proposed 3% COLA increase for full-time employees and the equity for a maximum 3% performance raises based on the supervisor's recommendation; the second largest increase requested for any Department is shown in the Robbins Fire Department. We are extremely proud to be financially stable enough to finally request the \$66,925.00 needed (accompanied by Moore County's EMS tax funding) to offer competitive pay for five (5) full-time professional firefighters and 1,900 part-time hours for the first time in the proud history of the Robbins Fire Department. For too long, citizen volunteers of Robbins have been trained, educated, and even equipped by the Robbins Fire Department but ultimately sought careers in other departments because of the lack of organic full-time positions or



lack of median pay opportunities. Manning the Robbins Fire Department full-time does not only have a dramatic impact of public safety, and the moral of our current employees, but also a direct impact to our economic development goals.

### **Strategic Goals and Priorities**

This year's budget development was guided by consistency in the following core priorities:

- Public Safety: Continued investment and continuity in police, fire, and public work services.
- Infrastructure: Consistent maintenance and the operation of our water distribution and sewer collection systems as a public service but also an economic stimulator.
- Economic Development: Support for local and incoming businesses, job creation, and multiple workforce initiatives.
- Quality of Life: Expansion of parks, trails, and any other recommended amenities that enhance community well-being and lifestyle enhancement.
- Financial Resilience: Continue to find additional revenue opportunities for town enhancement and capital upgrades in order to strengthen our Fund Balance/Reserves.

### **Economic Context**

As we continue to navigate a dynamic economic landscape here in Moore County, Robbins remains vigilant in addressing both opportunities and challenges. Despite inflation rates, the ebb and flow of market conditions, and cost uncertainty due to national level trade policies, we maintained a conservative approach to revenue forecasting, anticipating increased growth in population and ever important utility customers. With *real property* and *local sales tax* revenues exceeding annual projections, I am confident that the upward trend of growth will continue through incoming businesses and residents therefore, the responsible \$0.01 (equaling \$9,305.00) tax cut translates to a public message of fiscal stability while remaining prepared for economic fluctuations by having a healthy Fund Balance.



### **Revenue and Expenditure Highlights by Department**

Robbins Police Department (RPD): This FY the RPD has remained financially consistent with an overall mirrored request as the last FY including the increased personnel costs and overall benefit rate increases. RPD has also taken the initiative and was awarded a Rural Area Officer Salary Grant totaling over \$190,000.00 over three years for one full-time officer position; a \$10,000.00 equipment grant for state-of-the-art body cams and operating software and applied for another equipment grant for fleet radio upgrades and replacements. RPD has also adhered to their capital replacement plan for vehicles and equipment and discussed several years ago. RPD has deliberately transitioned its operational strategy this year from a *Problem Oriented Strategy* to a *Community Oriented Strategy*. This was a deliberate operational decision by Chief Haddock and I, relative to a peak and seemingly downward trend of drug related incidents; therefore, RPD now focusing more on community-based law and code enforcement with the goal of enhancing safety and quality of life for Robbins citizens.

Robbins Fire Department (RFD): As mentioned the \$66,925.00 increase adds to the Moore County EMS funding provided to offer competitive full-time firefighter pay. Chief Brown has anticipated this initiative over the last two years by increasing operational capacity in vehicles and equipment to essentially plug and play incoming personnel to mission parameters without dramatically increasing operational costs overall. The RFD is critical to the Town of Robbins not only for Firefighting but the day-to-day operations, assisting with an array of needed tasks such as traffic control, storm damage, inspections, community outreach, citizen training, and of course Farmers Day. Supporting the RFD's fiscal needs is a great accomplishment all leaders should take immense pride in.



Robbins Public Works (RPW): Personnel, funding, and mission set for RPW remains consistent. The wide range of daily duties is unfathomable for most people to understand. We continue to look for time saving techniques to free up RPW hours to increase focus on quality-of-life maintenance such as parks and streets. I firmly believe the *Water System Improvement Project* that will replace at least 350 (if not 700) water meters with advanced AMI cellular meters will free up at least 96-monthly man hours to be redesignated with other priority tasks for our four personnel for at least three days not including re-reads, cut-offs, or data entry by administrative staff. We still commit \$32,000.00 to outside contractors for WWTP Operations Technician but we will continue to train and mentor our employees in this career field with the goal of having a organically certified WWTP Operator.

Administration and Staff: The town staff continue to remain flexible and resilient by adding to each employees duties while the finance officer (FO) position remains unfilled. To relieve the immense number of tasks prescribed to the finance section, we've outsourced bi-weekly payroll with one of our local banking providers, contracted finance experts for monthly bank reconciliation, and reorganized the management of eleven (11) current grants we are engaged in. I cannot say enough about the committed public servants of town hall and the challenges they face daily with professionalism and grace. As mentioned in previous meetings, despite being a small municipality we are the only rural town in the county (and area) that fiscally manages two utility systems and our own police and fire department. This creates an overwhelming number of monthly transactions just to keep the bills paid not including finance official responsibilities such as fiscal analysis, budget preparation, and audit assistance. I am grateful we have continuity with the other two administrative positions that will step up and fill multiple roles when needed.



### **Staffing and Personnel Benefits**

This budget supports all current full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, with targeted additions in the Fire Department and one Finance Officer to meet current growing service demands. It also incorporates:

- 3% cost of living adjustment and up to a 3% performance raise due at each employee's annual review.
- Adjustments for healthcare and benefit costs.
- Required contributions to pension and retirement systems.

### **Water/Sewer Enterprise Fund**

Water and Sewer continue to be a revenue source despite the constant challenges to maintain both systems. I've learned that there is always going to be operational challenges to running our own systems, but the outcome has immense benefits to the community financially and quality of services. The Enterprise Budget of \$863,000.00 reflects maintaining current operational levels with a conservative increase in customers this year. Being under operational control of our utility systems gives us the ability to react and prioritize system repairs internally instead of relying on outside sources addressing them on their own timelines, priority, and leveraging the town financially for those repairs. Despite having a current *Utility Rate Study* being completed by Wooten Co. during this year's Sewer AIA and overall rising rates in the surrounding communities, I have analyzed the study and predicted that the growth expected this FY will offset the rate increase through increased demand for water and sewer. After months of analysis last year, we concluded that we ideally need 100 more water/sewer customers to feel financially stable in the enterprise fund to address the delaying *Capital Improvement Plan*. After much staff work, we concluded that a \$10 million line expansion project could facilitate the needed customer increase over the next 10 years, however; with the ever-changing economic environment, we are expected to add at least three industrial-rated customers and an estimated 100 customers within our current utility footprint in the next 24 months. This increase in demand will dramatically tip the rate scale at nearly zero



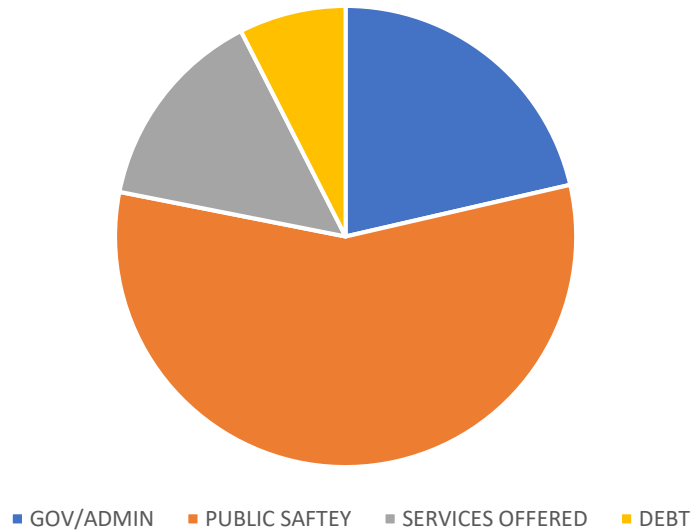
cost to the town, therefore I recommend keeping current rates until we can reassess the growth and operational needs of our system next year.

## **Conclusion**

The FY 25 Proposed Budget reflects our operational needs and financial sustainability. In order to maintain fiscal sustainability and prevent budget inflation by enormous yearly requests, we've proposed a strictly operating style budget and supported fiscal growth by using conservative revenue projections and consistently finishing each FY under budget. This has increased our fund balance, which gives the board of commissioners the ability to recommend and prioritize capital projects based on their priority of public need. I recommend high prioritized capital purchases be discussed and achieved through General Fund Balance transfer or can be integrated into the annual operating budget through a detailed capital purchased plan or saving strategy by a majority resolution. This tactic will offer budget predictability and assurance of capital replacement of critical items deeming essential by the board of commissioners along with the administration. Lastly, the BOC has proactively authorized over \$100,000.00 in critical service repairs such as cemetery security, electric updates, and WWTP security. It was very advantageous to make these decisions during the strategic planning meeting and all projects are currently ongoing. I look forward to collaborating with you in the weeks ahead to refine and adopt a budget that best serves all our residents.



### EXPENSE DISTRIBUTION FUND 10



### EXPENSE DISTRIBUTION FUND 30

