

BUDGET IN BRIEF



Letter from the Commissioners

Stokes County Board of County Commissioners is committed to ensuring that Stokes County is a charming, vibrant community that reflects our rich history and traditions. In January 2025, we held our first ever Strategic Retreat where we met with the county management team to prepare our 2026 Stokes County Operating Plan (SCOP), which includes the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget.

Annually, our team will build upon the operational planning process to adopt a balanced scorecard approach to identify strategic objectives to improve County services. This year we identified five significant operating plans: address salary compression, improve EMS staffing and performance, implement use and personal property tax compliance program, develop and implement annual resident survey and increase staffing by three (3) full time equivalent positions.

Our Board of Commissioners has adopted mission and vision statements that reflect our goals and aspirations now and in the future. Our mission is to protect, promote and enhance the quality of life for Stokes County residents and visitors with the vision that Stokes County is a dynamic and thriving community, rich in natural beauty and that embraces the future while respecting its rural heritage and history.

The \$74.6 million FY 2026 Budget contains a \$0.580 per \$100 valuation property tax rate, which is higher than revenue neutral. We are making a commitment to renovation and improvement by taking on other great initiatives and projects that are sure to enhance the quality of life and bring new value to the County of Stokes.

We continue to keep an ever-watchful eye on our operating environment, including the current economy with newly imposed tariff restrictions and an overall reduction in government and spending. With these considerations in mind, I believe we have prepared a Strategic Operating Plan that will promote, enhance, and sustain the quality of life in our rural and thriving county. I encourage you to read further about our plans and the FY 2026 Budget in our 2026 Strategic Operating Plan.



Quick Facts

\$74.6 M

Total Budget

\$0.580

Per \$100 of Valuation
Tax Rate

12

Significant Operating
Investments

3

Increase of Staff
Full Time Equivalents (FTEs)

How will your tax dollars be spent in FY 2026?

The FY 2026 Budget for salaries and benefits for Stokes County's 365 full-time equivalents (FTEs) accounts for 43% of total expenditures, or \$32.27 million. The budget includes a 2.9% cost of living adjustment and merit raises at an average of 2% per employee. The County currently pays for 100% of health, dental, and vision insurance premiums for employee-only coverage.

The FY 2026 Budget includes an increase of 3 FTEs for three positions. These new positions are related to the need to increase staff capacity to serve a growing population in the county.

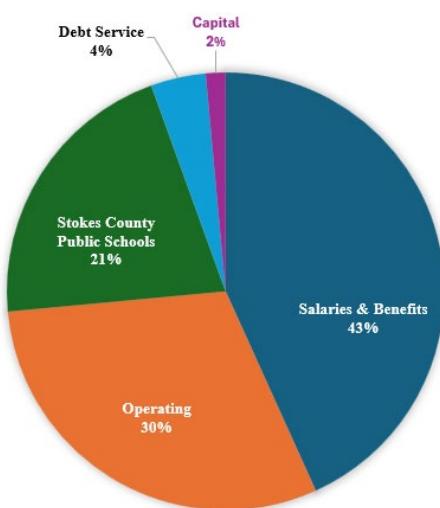
The FY 2026 Budget includes \$1.084 million in capital investment, or 1.45% of total expenditures. Significant operating costs include funding for initiatives supporting the County's goals and objectives without adding any to the County's debt service.

The County's third largest expenditure is for Stokes County Public Schools which makes up 20.95% of the overall budget.

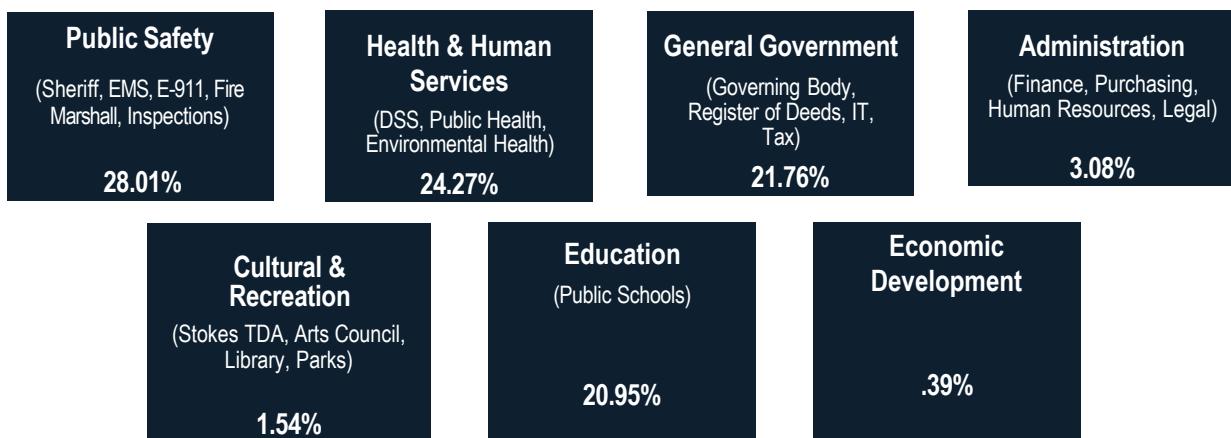
New Positions Funded

- Environmental Health Specialist
- Deputy Director of Social Services (50% paid by North Carolina)
- Emergency Medical Services Training Officer

\$74.6 Million Budgeted Expenditures



Expenditures by Function



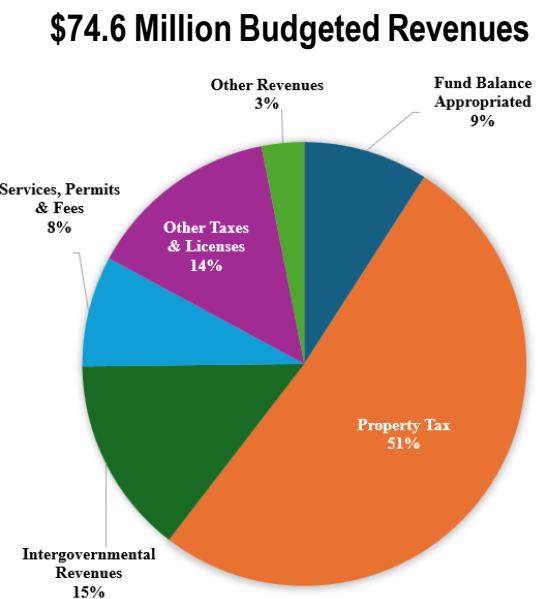
In FY 2026, the County has \$3,038,076 in debt service expenditures related to leases of capital assets, Courthouse and Jail Expansion, EMS Station and Autumn Square.

Overall, the FY 2026 Budget totals \$74,644,482 or 4% more than the prior year's General Fund budget. The FY 2026 Budget as presented results in a per capita expenditure of \$1,635 based on a projected population of 45,659.

How is Stokes County Funded in FY 2026?

Historically the primary revenue source for Stokes County is property taxes which account for 51.3% of total revenues, or \$38.33 million.

In FY 2026, the County elected to adopt an inflation-adjusted revenue neutral tax rate of \$0.58 per \$100 of valuation. Current revaluation increased the value of area homes. Though overall property tax values increased, the inflation-adjusted revenue neutral tax rate is \$0.16 lower than this year's tax rate.



Other key revenues that make up 39.6% of total General Fund revenues include local option sales taxes, utility sales taxes, and other state-collected revenues. Of these, local option sales taxes are the largest intergovernmental revenue source for the County, representing 14.39% of the total budget. Sales tax revenue for FY 2026 is projected above FY 2025 estimates.

At the end of the year, we estimate the County will use \$6.78 million in fund balance to balance the budget.

