

# HANDOUT #1: PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES (CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT)

## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: I DIDN'T KNOW THEY DID ALL THAT!

### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is created by a county or municipality to identify and detail major capital spending (construction, buildings, land, roads, sewer) and planned equipment purchases. It usually has two parts:

- Capital **BUDGET**: The planned budget for capital improvements for the upcoming year
- Capital **PLAN**: The future plan & budget -- about 4–10 years out

### What's in it?

Almost everything (that's not a recurring cost)! **BIG** spending for construction, infrastructure development, land acquisition, and equipment that supports:

- **Culture and Recreation**: Construction/ renovation of parks, community centers, senior centers, etc.— from building maintenance to HVAC systems, and more
- **Public Protection**: Spending related to emergency services, fire, police, etc. – police car purchases, new fire stations, ambulances and more
- **Water & Sewer**: Construction, maintenance of sewer and water infrastructure
- **Technology**: Major technology and communication for the County/Town (phone, internet systems)
- **Economic & Physical Development**: Spending for new/ improved infrastructure (e.g. water & sewer, housing, downtown revitalization, etc.) to attract economic development
- **General Services**: Construction/ renovation of County/Town buildings; public transportation; equipment (bulldozers, lawn mowers, etc.)

### Who are the Decision Makers?

- County & Town Commissioners
- Town & County Managers
- Public Works Department
- Department Heads (Park & Recreation, Police & Fire Departments, etc.)

### How can YOU engage?

- Know what's in the CIP, especially the annual budget – request a copy if it's not online
- Educate others – spread the word!
- Advocate one-on-one to decision-makers
- Know the timeline! When is the CIP being developed? When is the annual CIP budget approved?

# HANDOUT #2: LOCAL POLICIES, REGULATIONS, CODES & ORDINANCES

## Local Governments: I Didn't Know They Did All That!

### Why are they important?

- Local policies, regulations, codes and ordinances regulate a lot in your community.
- Many rural communities have only very basic ordinances regulating land use, such as the creation of subdivisions.
- Other communities have much more detailed, and sometimes innovative ordinances, that can positively affect the issues you care about.

### Here are examples of ordinances and regulations that other communities have adopted:

#### Land Use

- Creating zoning that establishes where commercial, residential, industrial, or other types of development can be developed
- Designating/ regulating historic areas or landmarks
- Establishing standards for design and construction of streets and sidewalks

#### Housing

- Incentivizing a % of affordable housing units for every new housing development
- Encouraging workforce (teachers, police, firefighters) housing development
- Enforcing the state building code
- Adopting minimum housing code
- Condemning unsafe or abandoned structures
- Regulating the location, appearance, and dimensions of manufactured homes

#### Protecting the Environment & Open Space

- Limiting developing near the Town or County water supply source
- Limiting clear-cutting of trees during development
- Requiring an environmental impact assessment for large development projects
- Requiring open space minimums

#### Encouraging Public Transportation

- Establishing new bus routes
- Setting street design standards to be more pedestrian friendly

### **Promoting Economic Development**

- Designating business districts
- Creating incentives for redevelopment and investments in town
- Identifying and building on cultural and natural assets

### **Promoting Agriculture**

- Adopting agriculture-friendly ordinances
- Protecting working agricultural lands and limiting non-agricultural uses of the land

### **Protecting against Natural Disasters**

- Limiting development in floodplains
- Mandating development that effectively controls storm water

### **How can YOU engage?**

- **Educate yourself:** Know where you can find a copy of your local ordinances
- **Know your decision-makers:** Town and County commissioners, planning boards/commissions; Town and County Plan, Town & County Planners, your local, regional Council of Government
- **Attend and/or monitor** town and county commissioner's meetings
- **Research & advocate** for innovative ordinances around the issues you care about

# HANDOUT #3: CITIZEN INPUT: CITIZEN BOARDS & COMMITTEES

## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: I DIDN'T KNOW THEY DID ALL THAT!

**WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?** Citizen boards and committees are one of the most common and significant ways citizens can participate in their local government.

- These groups work with local elected officials to study and advocate for the needs of local citizens and provide guidance and policy recommendations around their Board's priority focus.
- Some boards are legally mandated, but most are created at the discretion of governing boards to provide community input for various local government functions.

### EXAMPLES OF LOCAL BOARDS

Please note: Your county or region may or may not have these Boards – it varies by county; Also, these Boards may have other names or titles, according to your local government.

- **Planning Board**
  - ✓ Reviews and makes recommendations on City- or County-wide plans
  - ✓ Reviews and make recommendations on planning policies, comprehensive plan amendments, zoning map changes, proposed changes to development ordinances
  - ✓ Develops and recommends new policies and ordinances
- **Aging or Senior Services Board**
  - ✓ Promotes needed services, programs and funding that impacts older citizens
- **Parks and Recreation Board**
  - ✓ Makes recommendations affecting parks planning, development and operation; recreation facilities, policies and programs; and public trails and open space
  - ✓ Makes recommendations on funding new or expanding parks and recreation facilities
- **Workforce Development Board**
  - ✓ Allocates workforce development funding to maximize the efforts of government, business, and education
- **Housing Advisory Committee**
  - ✓ Promotes and develops a variety of housing opportunities that meet the needs of the community
- **Historic Preservation Commission**
  - ✓ Guides the designation of historic sites and provides preservation policy recommendation

- **Board of Health** (Mandated by State law, may include three members of general public)
  - ✓ Makes and adopts policies and rules for the County health department
  - ✓ Provides guidance on health issues in the county
  - ✓ Appoints the Health Director
- **Board of Social Services** (Mandated by State law, may include a general public appointee)
  - ✓ Selects the Director of Social Services
  - ✓ Advises the County and Town in ways to improve the social conditions of the community
  - ✓ Consults with the Director of Social Services to solve problems and to plan the budget
- **Juvenile Crime Prevention Council**
  - ✓ Assesses the needs of juveniles in the community
  - ✓ Evaluates the adequacy of resources available to meet those needs, and develops or proposes ways to address unmet needs
  - ✓ Evaluates the performance of juvenile services and programs in the community and evaluates each funded program
  - ✓ Increases public awareness of the causes of delinquency and of strategies to reduce the problem
- **Transportation Advisory Committee**
  - ✓ Provides technical recommendations to the County Commissioners who make decisions and policies on issues related to transportation related issues
- **Local Food Council**
  - ✓ Recommends practices or policies that affect one or more aspects of the food system
- **Economic Development Commission**
  - ✓ Provides customized business location information
  - ✓ Serves as liaison with local and area economic development allies

#### HOW CAN YOU ENGAGE?

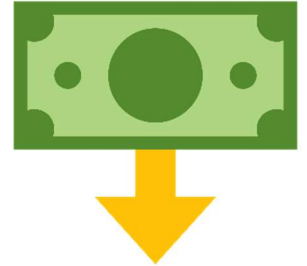
- **Educate yourself:** find out what Boards and Committees exist for your community – if a list is not online, ask your Town Clerk
- **Apply for a Board or Committee position,** especially if there is a vacancy
- Make **others aware** of these committees and nominate them if they're a fit
- **Attend** the Board meetings if they are open to the public
- **Reach out** directly to Board members if it's an issue you care about

# HANDOUT #4: BUDGET: FOLLOW THE MONEY

## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: I DIDN'T KNOW THEY DID ALL THAT!

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?** The adoption of the annual budget is one of the most important activities undertaken by a municipal council.

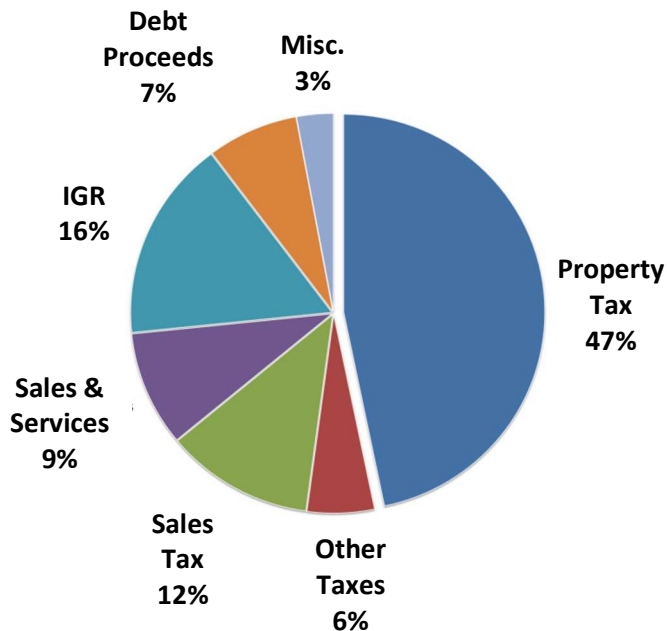
- Although a Town or County may state other priorities, their TRUE priorities will be reflected in their annual budget.
- NC laws requires that the budget be BALANCED, meaning Revenues = Expenditures
- Although many budget line items are fixed and recurring costs, much of the **budget is open for discretionary spending.**



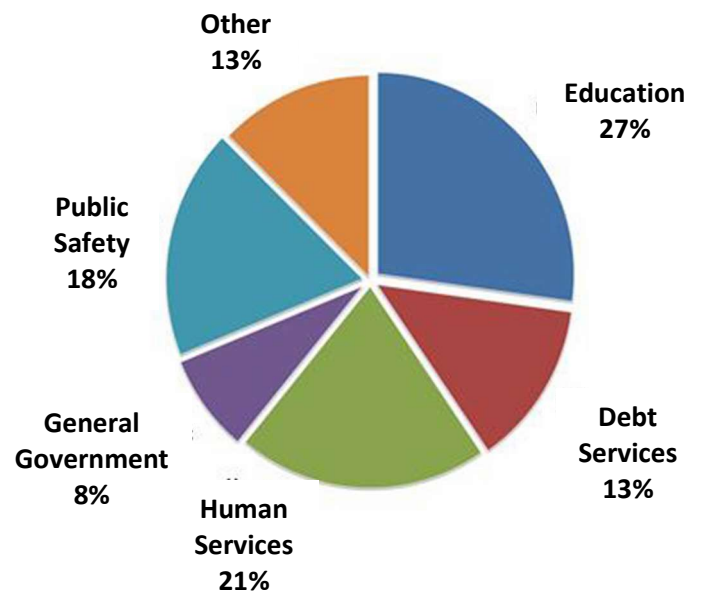
In 2013, a paper by the NC Center for County Research, *Basics of County Government Budgeting and Finance*, examined budgets for all 100 NC counties and found:

### Revenue and Expenditures for all 100 Counties (2013)

#### Revenue



#### Expenditures



## HOW IS THE BUDGET DEVELOPED? HOW CAN I ENGAGE?

At a MINIMUM, NC law requires a basic timeline (although counties and towns can expand the budget process to build in more citizen input):

TIME	BUDGET PROCESS	HOW CAN I ENGAGE?
~ October - January	Town/County Manager determines the budget process	Contact your town or County Clerk to find out the budget process for your community
By April 30 <sup>th</sup>	Each Department head must submit a budget request for their department for the coming fiscal year	Get to know and work with department heads so they understand the needs of your community
By June 1 <sup>st</sup>	The Town/County Manager will submit a budget and short “budget message” for consideration to the local Commissioners	Review the budget and budget message (short summary) to understand what’s in it.
After Budget is submitted to Commissioners	The Town Clerk will share the budget with local news media (at a minimum)	Reach out to other supporters of your issue. Does the budget support your issue or not?
After a minimum of 10 days	Local Commissioners hold a public hearing for comment on the budget	Mobilize support to speak on behalf of your issue. Does the budget support your issue or not?
By July 10 <sup>th</sup>	The budget ordinance is adopted	Praise leaders if the budget supports your issue
Rest of the fiscal year	The budget is implemented	Monitor the implementation of the budget