

**Mayor**  
Rhonda Haight

**City Council**  
Angie Arp, Mayor Pro Tempore  
Jack Taylor  
Christy Kay  
Bill Bivins  
William Whaley



**City Administrator**  
Eric M. Soroka

**City Clerk**  
Amy Mintz

**City Attorney**  
Chuck Conerly

**City of Blue Ridge**  
**Public Hearing**  
**November 8, 2023**

**6:00 p.m.**

**Blue Ridge City Hall**

**480 West First Street**

**Blue Ridge, Ga 30513**

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- 1. Call Meeting to Order**
- 2. Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance**
- 3. Public Hearing**
  - a. PUBLIC INPUT ON PROPOSED FY2024 BUDGET
- 4. Adjournment**

**Our Mission Statement**

Our mission is to enrich the quality of life in Blue Ridge for all our citizens. We pledge to work in partnership with our residents, all stake holders and the Fannin County government to protect, preserve and secure the quaintness of our small-town community and to enhance the natural beauty of our environment.



## **BUDGET IN BRIEF 2024 BUDGET**

*This document has been prepared by the City of Blue Ridge to provide important information to the public*

The budget document, which includes all City Funds and service programs, has been prepared to provide the public with a comprehensive overview of all City services and financial framework. The preparation of the budget document marks a commitment to a planned and professional process of developing a budget that will address both current and future issues facing the City, providing adequate service levels and the necessary justification to support all expenditure requests. Importantly, it also serves as an aid to the residents in providing a better understanding of the City's operating and fiscal programs.

### **Budget Priorities/Goals**

- Maintain the “roll back” property tax rate in light of the economic times our residents and businesses are experiencing. The recommended tax is 4.106 millage rate.
- Fund and address high priority capital improvements that include drainage improvements, road resurfacing, sidewalk improvements, numerous needed infrastructure improvements to the water and sewer system and construction of a new replacement downtown restroom facility.
- Bridge the revenue gap by utilizing fund balance from previous years to support nonrecurring infrastructure improvements.
- In response to high inflation rates for goods and services, limit increases in operating costs while maintaining current service levels and programs.
- Continue programs and events that expand the use of the City’s Farmers Market facility.
- Ensure the safety of those who live, work and visit the City.
- Work closely with Fannin County Government to serve the needs of our residents.
- Continue to utilize technology and update systems to improve productivity and lower costs of providing services.

## Summary of All Budgetary Funds

The total proposed budget for 2024, including all funds, capital outlay and debt service, is \$24,020,834. This is \$4,352,627 or 22.1% more as compared to the prior year. Capital expenditure/Infrastructure improvements accounted for \$4,159,491 or 96% of the increase. Operating expenditure totaled \$7,765,225 and increased by 3%. Debt Service expenditures total \$817,677 and decreased by 4.2% by some debt being paid off and the changes to the timing of debt payments for projects in the Water and Sewer Fund. Capital Outlay costs increased by 36.9% or \$4,159,491 by funding additional projects and addressing infrastructure needs.

	2023	2024	Increase (Decrease)	% Change
Operating Expenses	\$ 7,536,201	\$ 7,765,225	\$ 229,024	3.0%
Debt Service	853,565	817,677	(35,888)	-4.2%
Capital Outlay	11,278,441	15,437,932	4,159,491	36.9%
Total	\$ 19,668,207	\$ 24,020,834	\$ 4,352,627	22.1%

### Fund Summary By Percentage

FUND	PROPOSED AMOUNT	% OF BUDGET
General	\$ 5,115,021	21.3%
Confiscated Assets	1,500	0.0%
Special Revenue - ARPA	-	0.0%
Hotel/Motel	1,215,000	5.1%
SPLOST	2,220,000	9.2%
Water and Sewer	15,069,313	62.7%
Component Unit- DDA	400,000	1.7%
Total	\$ 24,020,834	100.0%

## Capital Outlay

A total of \$15,437,932 has been budgeted for Capital Outlay projects. This is a 36.9% increase over the prior year. Below is a summary of the major projects:

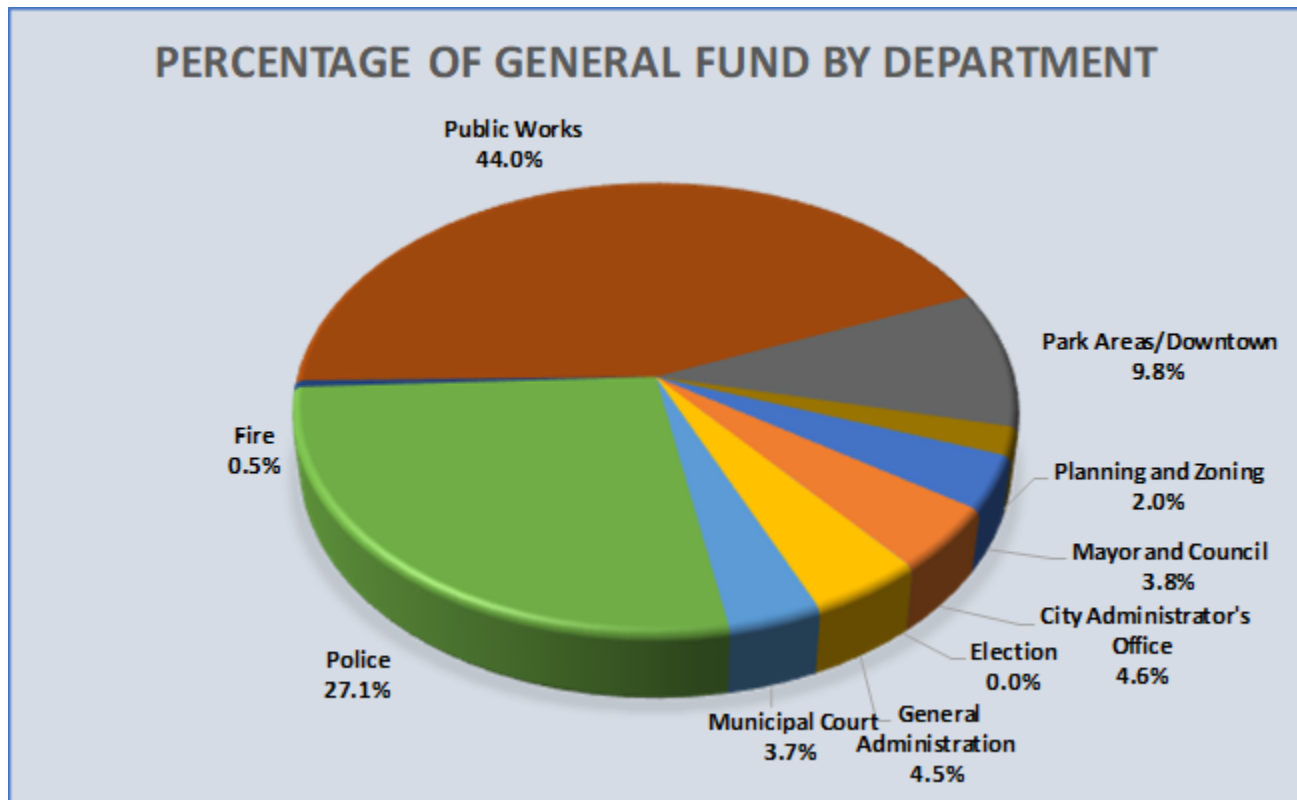
- Sewer Plant Rehabilitation \$4,900,000
- Industrial Road Lift Station Upgrade \$3,300,000
- Mountain Tops Water Main Replacement \$2,000,000
- Drainage Improvements \$1,900,000
- Downtown Replacement Restroom Facility Construction \$880,000
- Road Resurfacing Sidewalk Improvements \$1,284,370
- East First Street Sewer Main Repair \$250,000
- Austin Street Water Main Replacement \$150,000
- Raw Water Vault Replacement \$100,000
- Downtown Park Gazebo Repairs \$50,000

Funds have also been set aside to address improvements at the Farmers Market.

## General Fund

The General Fund is used to account for resources and expenditures that are available for the City's general operations of City government functions.

The revenues, available for allocation in the 2024 fiscal year General Fund Budget, are anticipated to be \$5,115,021. This is an increase of \$324,313 or 6.8% as compared to last year. The majority of the increase is attributed to revenues from sales tax, permits and parking fees.



## Confiscated Asset Fund

The Confiscated Assets Fund is a special revenue fund used to account for the proceeds of specific revenue sources that are legally restricted to expenditures from the sale of confiscated assets. This fund enhances special projects within the Police Department. This cost center is funded solely through property and asset forfeitures. The amount budget for 2024 is \$1,500 and remains the same as the prior year.

## SPLOST Fund 2017

The Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) 2017 Fund is a capital project fund. The SPLOST 2017 accounts for construction of major capital projects financed by SPLOST proceeds. A 2017 intergovernmental agreement between Fannin County and the City of Blue Ridge, expired in October, stated the City may anticipate \$2.1 million in SPLOST 2017 proceeds over the life of the SPLOST for approved capital projects. It is projected that fund balance revenues for this fund in 2024 will be \$1,520,000. Major projects to be funded include \$1,100,000 for drainage improvements and \$420,000 for mountain tops watermain replacement.

## SPLOST Fund 2023

The Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) 2023 Fund is a capital project fund. This is a voter approved renewal of the the SPLOST and accounts for construction of major capital projects financed by SPLOST proceeds. The 2023 intergovernmental agreement between Fannin County and the City of Blue Ridge, stated beginning in November 2023, the City may anticipate \$4.2 million in SPLOST 2023 proceeds over the life of the SPLOST for approved capital projects as follows:

\$3,001,600 Maintenance repair and construction of roads, drainage and sidewalks  
 \$1,002,400 Water & Sewer upgrades and capital outlay  
 \$ 196,000 Recreational Facilities and improvements

It is projected that the revenues for this fund in 2024 will be \$700,000 to fund drainage projects.

## Hotel/Motel Tax Fund

This fund is a special revenue fund used to account for revenues and expenditures specifically associated with the Hotel Motel Tax allowed by State law. The Tax is an excise tax on rooms, lodgings, and accommodations to provide additional funding for the promotion of tourism, conventions, and trade shows in the city. Revenues are projected to be \$1,215,000 for 2024. The Hotel/Motel tax is estimated to generate \$735,000. The tax received is then distributed as follows:

Non-Restricted- Proceeds can be used for any legal purpose in the City (37.5%) and is transferred to the General Fund.

Restricted – Tourism, Conventions and Trade Shows – Destination Marketing Organization, Fannin County Chamber of Commerce (43.75%).

Restricted – Tourism Product Development (TPD) – Creation or expansion of physical attraction which are available and open to the public and which improve destination appeal to visitors and used by visitors (18.75%)

The funds retained by the City will be used to assist funding the Downtown Bathroom Facility construction and improvements to the Farmers Market.

## Water and Sewer Fund

The revenues and expenditures, available for allocation in the 2024 fiscal year Water and Sewer Fund Budget, are anticipated to be \$15,069,313. This is a increase of \$3,450,359 or 29.7% as compared to last year. The majority of the increase is the result of \$3,320,000 more in capital projects/infrastructure improvements when compared to the prior fiscal year. This includes rehabilitation of the Sewer Plant and lift stations, reducing infiltration into the sewer system, and replacing aging water mains and lines. In order to support increased operating costs and to address infrastructure improvements and debt service requirements, water or sewer rates are recommended to increase by 3.75%. Rates have not increased in four years.

### Expenditures by Category

		2023		2024	Increase (Decrease)
Operating Expenditures	\$	3,190,598	\$	3,356,844	\$ 166,247
Capital Outlay		7,620,000		10,940,000	3,320,000
Debt Service		808,357		772,469	(35,888)
Total Expenditures	\$	11,618,955	\$	15,069,313	\$ 3,450,359

## Expenditures by Function

	2023	2024	Increase (Decrease)
Sewer Administration	\$ 174,548	\$ 211,787	\$ 37,239
Sewer Maintenance	2,509,119	4,068,363	1,559,245
Sewer Treatment Plant	3,640,004	5,584,985	1,944,981
Subtotal Sewer	\$ 6,323,671	\$ 9,865,135	\$ 3,541,464
Water Administration	918,384	932,323	13,939
Water Treatment	715,657	743,667	28,010
Water Distribution	3,661,243	3,528,188	(133,055)
Water Loss	-	-	-
Subtotal Water	5,295,284	5,204,179	(91,105)
 Total Expenditures	 11,618,955	 15,069,313	 3,450,359

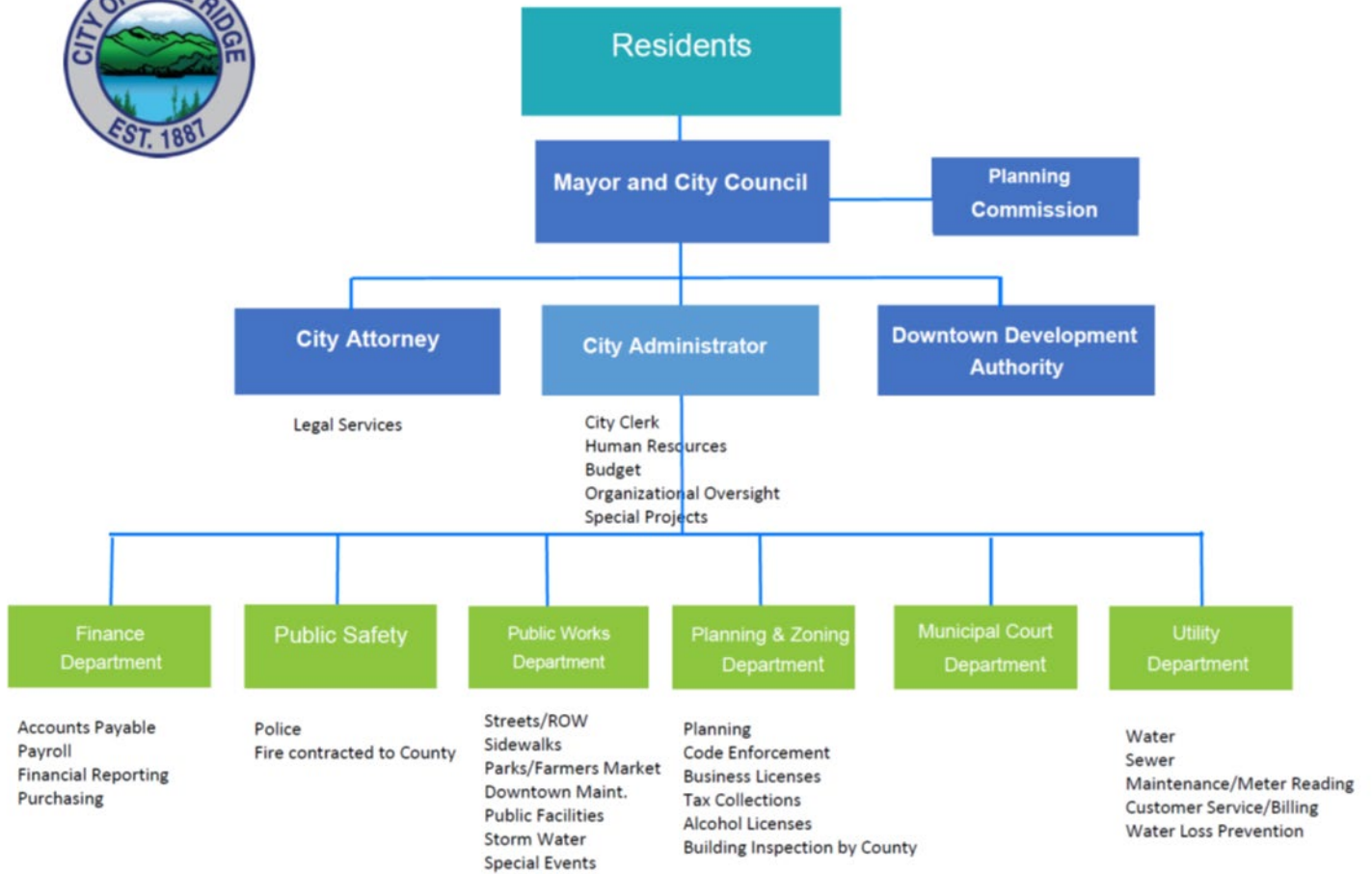
## Five Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Budget document includes a five year projection of major capital improvement projects and related funding sources to be utilized as a planning guide for future budgets. It will be updated annually to respond to changing needs and priorities. Below is an overview of the estimated spending plan for 2024 – 2028.

Five Year Capital Improvement Program

Project	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Total
Vehicles and Equipment	250,000	\$529,000	290,000	84,000	-	1,153,000
Building Improvements	\$1,063,562	435,000	435,000	435,000	135,000	2,503,562
Drainage Improvements	\$1,900,000	-	-	-	-	1,900,000
Road Resurfacing	1,284,370	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	900,000	5,184,370
Sewer Plant Improvements	4,900,000	-	-	-	-	4,900,000
Lift Station and Sewer Line Improvement	3,610,000	2,365,000	1,710,000	60,000	60,000	7,805,000
Water Plant Improvements	100,000	325,000	250,000	100,000	75,000	850,000
Water Main and Line Improvements	2,330,000	850,000	100,000	850,000	100,000	4,230,000
<b>TOTAL CAPITAL OUTLAY</b>	<b>\$ 15,437,932</b>	<b>\$ 5,504,000</b>	<b>\$ 3,785,000</b>	<b>\$ 2,529,000</b>	<b>\$ 1,270,000</b>	<b>\$ 28,525,932</b>

## City of Blue Ridge Organizational Chart



## Our Mission Statement

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