

## Beaufort County OKs \$132.6M budget for 2022

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Beaufort County Council approved a \$132.6 million budget for fiscal year 2022 Wednesday that slightly increases taxes, boosts pay for emergency medical personnel and establishes a garbage fund.

The vote was 11-0.

Administrator Eric Greenway said the [balanced budget](#) improves services and anticipates continued population growth. Here are the highlights:

- The owner of a \$250,000 home will see an [estimated tax increase](#) of \$7.50, according to the county. The owner of a \$400,000 home will pay an additional \$12. The tax rate to fund operations was frozen, which will minimize the overall tax increase. However, there is a small increase in taxes earmarked to pay off debt and interest. The total number of mills approved was a tax of 64.8 mills on the dollar of assessed value of property, a .6 mill increase. County officials noted that number could change because annual revenue expectations can't be determined until the state provides the county with final revenue numbers.
- The budget is \$2 million bigger because of an 8% increase of tax revenue as a result of population growth. The county's annual growth rate has been 1.6% to 1.7% a year, according to Census estimates.
- The county cut \$800,000 in personnel costs by eliminating unfilled staff positions.
- First responders are getting a pay increase thanks to an additional \$1.97 million budgeted for Emergency Medical Services. The starting salary for a basic EMT will increase from \$13.33 an hour to \$15.80 hour after July 1. The starting salary for a basic paramedic will go from \$14.66 to \$17.42. Earlier this month, EMS employees were informed of [a new \\$250 shift differential](#), on top of their regular pay, for working 48 hours. That's up from the existing \$50 for a two-day shift. [The Island Packet reported in June](#) that extended 48-hour shifts are the norm rather than the exception, and that the EMS department had blown through its overtime budget repeatedly in recent years, potentially compromising worker and patient safety.
- [A Solid Waste and Recycling Enterprise Fund](#) was established to improve the service. The county had initially planned to charge property owners a user fee to drop off their trash and recycling at one of the county's convenience centers. Instead, residential property owners will see a separate line item on their tax bills dedicated solely to trash and recycling operations. Officials said it would not raise property taxes, however.
- Capital requests were cut by \$2 million from the general fund because of new federal spending programs.
- A \$1.6 million spending increase for Parks and Recreation will expand services and explore expansion of child after-school and summer camp programs.

The 2022 spending plan comes days after the county had to approve a budget amendment, shifting money from other line items, because it was [\\$5.4 million over budget](#). In its 2021 budget, Beaufort County froze employee raises and made cuts to departments such as information technology — a department that had seen an influx in costs due to virtual meetings and new equipment.

Watch Wednesday's meeting at The County Channel's website at [www.beaufortcountysc.gov/thecountychannel](http://www.beaufortcountysc.gov/thecountychannel).

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Best Regards,  
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