

ROBBINS, NC

Newsletter



>>> A Word with the Manager and Mayor

What a year for the town of Robbins. The Town's leaders have successfully dropped Real Property tax rates for the third year in a row. The Fiscal Year 2023-24 (FY24) budget meeting on June 8th displayed the capabilities and strength of the Robbins Board of Commissioners, Town Manager, and town employees. In the past year, Robbins Town Hall, specifically, has worked tirelessly to earn its spot back on the Moore County map and in the hearts of its own citizens.

For the FY24 fiscal year, Robbins projected to receive a total of \$1,704,400 in revenue and presented a plan of expenses totaling \$1,514,333 with a \$50,000 capital reserve. The Robbins team earned these numbers through tenacity, hard work, and some outside the box thinking. For example, this year alone, Robbins completed several lingering past due annual financial audits (FY20, FY21) to become compliant with the North Carolina Local Government Commission. Along with the audits, each of the four town departments completed this year under budget. Each department chief under the management of Clint Mack, turned to alternative ways to raise funding rather than eagerly spending the taxpayer's money.

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In a follow-up interview after the budget meeting, Town Manager Clint Mack shared his thoughts and feelings concerning the budget meeting, Robbins' success and future, and addressed local concerns.

Q: What are your feelings and thoughts after a successful year and successful budget process and its approval?

TM: "I am very optimistic about the future. Primarily because we've had another good fiscal year, and leading into this budget, we've shown signs of growth; more growth and savings means more ability to provide amenities and a better quality of life back to the people of Robbins."

Q: What strategies did you and your departments implement to remain under budget in the previous fiscal year?

TM: "I told them to avoid long-standing bureaucratic contracts or services that aren't needed. And I strongly encouraged the chiefs to use their money how they felt they needed to. They took that to heart. The police department did very well; they decided to take a lot of their equipment budget and invest it into their vehicle fleet. The fire department found grant money for a fire truck so they could invest more money in firefighter equipment and water rescue equipment for our river rescue team. Giving them more liberty to think outside the box and supporting them financially led us not to spend any more money than in previous years."

Q: How do you combat rumors about the future that may undermine Robbins' potential?

TM: "I take rumors at face value. Anyone who doubts our potential doesn't know the history of Robbins and certainly doesn't know our current situation and potential. Robbins is full of some of the most resilient and hardworking people I've ever seen. They are the backbone of our history and our future. We have seen manufacturing and textile towns throughout the south dry up while Robbins has consistently survived. It shows that even at rock bottom, Robbins can still sustain. My goal is to one day get Robbins to excel economically, not on the backs of our town's individual taxpayers but with the combined help of corporate business and sales tax. I am committed to changing Robbins by inviting more businesses, supporting our small businesses, and complementing their overall goals with our resources.

Q: What is your response to gossip about scarce water availability in Robbins?"

TM: "We have a very equitable contract with Montgomery County at a fair market rate of \$2.99 per thousand gallons of water for over 7 million gallons a month. That's a good contract that we've been lucky to have over the years. The problem is that we have an abundance of infrastructure (in a way) for our water. Karl Robbins was pretty brilliant; he ensured that Robbins had the means for growth and larger infrastructure by installing 10-12 inch water mains everywhere. Once our larger industry moved to other tax-exclusionary states, the extensive water usage our system was designed for was no longer there. My analogy is always, water is a lot like milk; both go bad if it sits in the jug for too long. Therefore, we must flush out any aging water to ensure clean water is always in the lines. We actually have plenty of water. Our town's average usage is about 3 million gallons a month. At the height of Robbins' industry, the town was using over 1 million gallons a day. Many people ask why we can't get our own water plant like before? The fact is, not adjusted for inflation, the average rate just to support the water infrastructure and maintenance is nearly \$3.00 per thousand gallons. The cost of operating a daily treatment facility alone, it would cost a minimum of \$5.50 per thousand gallons based on the number of customers we have in town. So that would mean rates of \$8-\$9.00 per thousand gallons not including the price or debt of building a water plant. With our current usage rate and subscribers, it is way more fiscally responsible and cheaper for citizens to buy water from another treated water source and use technical experts to ensure the quality is there; that's what we are doing currently."

Q: What is Robbins' current relationship between Moore County water and sewer?

TM: "It was good timing at the start of my job in Robbins because the Moore County election season was just starting. Everyone in the county office now came by to speak with me, and we had candid discussions about their and our goals. Unfortunately, not having a full-time manager for a few years in Robbins hurt that relationship, so we needed to re-establish who Robbins is and our intention to be very relevant in Moore County especially in regards to resources. Right now, I know I can sustain and manage Robbins' utility rates with our current resources. Where I get worried is when we have economic opportunities needing us to expand our infrastructure.

The going rate for water lines is currently about a million dollars a mile. Unless I can see a fairly immediate return on those spent dollars, it will be tough to justify to our board of commissioners that we need to put up 2-3 million dollars of capital to expand our infrastructure. I do not think we are ready for that yet. However, those opportunities may arise quicker than we can find other sources of funding for. So, we are having that conversation with Moore County. The Northern Moore area of growth, how is it relevant to them and us and what partnering together for water can mean for both. We have our reservoir, which is a 120 million gallon water resource, Bear Creek access, and a gateway to Deep River. Our resources are essential to the future of both Robbins and Moore County. The simple fact is, the number one revenue maker south of the traffic circle arises from tourism, i.e., golf. The one thing you need to sustain a good golf course is water. Moore County's current water plan will not last 30 years as previously thought; it is more like a 15 to 20-year plan because of the impressive overall growth in the county. They are moving full steam ahead to secure whatever water source they can for the future because it is financially and bureaucratically challenging to get water sources to users, especially in a hurry. Now sewer is an exciting topic everyone likes to ignore, but where you have water, you have wastewater. Therefore, lucky for Robbins, we have a wastewater treatment plant that is almost ten times too big for us. We are only processing about 100,000 gallons daily out of the 1.5 million the facility can ideally handle. That's a resource I have explained to Moore County that a partnership for wastewater could be quickly done just as much as water, if not both. Wastewater, at best, is usually a break-even type of business unless you have the ideal amount of customers for your plant, but it is a service that people need. So, of course, expanding the sewer system like with water, will cost a lot of capital to get hundreds of more customers. For the future, areas like Seven Lakes, West End, Zions Grove, and Eagle Springs could be more primed for development with adequate utilities and Moore County is actively addressing how to support that potential growth. The number one topic in Moore County along with water is that they need more sewer; and I have a resource with space for more usage. Robbins' sewer plant is like an empty bus, and Moore County might have some people (or poop) who need a ride, but it's up to them to hop on."

Q: What actions are you taking to improve the water quality, availability, and usage in Robbins?

TM: "Our most recent project is our third water tank, the Tracy Brown Water Tank upgrade that we paid for out of pocket, which is a good indicator of the health of our Enterprise Fund. Public Works noticed the southern side of town's water quality was in compliance but not the same quality as the northern end of town, where we have tank aerators and mixers that were upgraded with a grant in 2018. So, we did procurement and secured a \$50,000 project that will start next month to retrofit the Tracy Brown Tank to improve its storage quality. This means the whole south side of Robbins will have the same quality and be in as assured compliance as the other areas of town. This will also eliminate most of our water flushing. We have also met with hydraulic engineers to update our hydraulic model. Once we got all the smart people in the room, we saw about a \$100,000 decrease in our annual water cost. We did not need to flush as much water because we were using the water model and chlorinating techniques prescribed. I am very proud of our progress because the top priority the board expressed to me was the water rates and why they have had to be so high. Essentially we were buying 6 million gallons but only selling 2-3, but we have since figured out where that loss is coming from and addressed it"

After meeting with Clink Mack, I sat down with Mayor Cameron Dockery to ask questions about his vision for the town of Robbins as well as his thoughts on the budget meeting and its unanimous approval.

Q: What was your initial response to the recent budget meeting?

M: "I thought it was great. The commissioners were very complimentary of the past fiscal year's process and results. To my understanding, previous budget meetings were difficult in the past. So it was nice to have agreement from everyone. This budget was well crafted to maximize the money we have to get the things we need and allowed the commissioners and I to buy in enthusiastically."

Q: What are your hopes for Robbins financially in the upcoming fiscal year?

M: "We hope businesses keep coming in and doing well, which will increase tax revenue. Hopefully, we receive the grants we applied for, and hopefully, our water and sewer maintenance repairs will stay down so we can maximize our dollars."

Q: How are you, the Board of Commissioners, and the Town Manager collaborating on the budget and future goals of Robbins?

M: "We often take time to brainstorm, and the Town Manager reinforces our town vision. The Bible says without vision, people perish. The Town Manager helps bring a vision for Robbins through the budget and has successfully sold that vision to the Board for three years. Everyone on the Board has their own goals they wish to accomplish, but we can coalesce around the ultimate objective. We aim to have as many parks as possible for the citizens, especially the kids. We also would love to see more and more town spirit and collaboration through our events like Farmers Day, the Freedom Fest in June, and the coming up Fall Fest. We love to do these events for our people and to display a good image of Robbins to the public."

Q: What is your vision for Robbins' future?

M: "I want to see industry come. Our utilities limit us; however, we are willing to get grants and funding to see profound changes made so Robbins can be conducive for industry and ultimately become a better community. If we become a better community and a different kind of town that supports its citizens, Robbins will continue to grow."

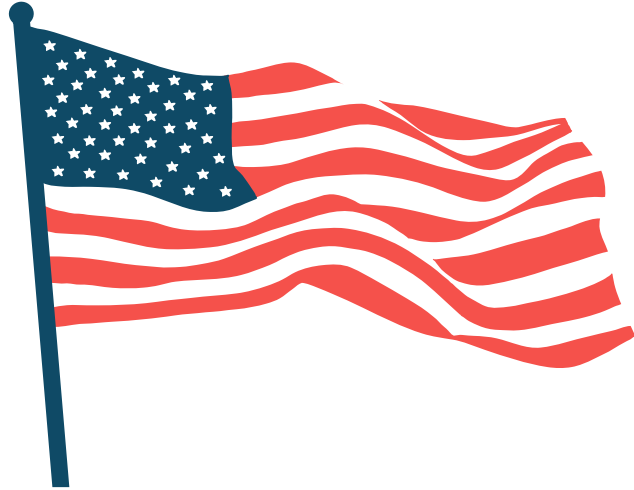
In closing, the Town Manager and the Mayor are very optimistic about Robbins's current state and future. The Town of Robbins should be incredibly proud of its accomplishments for this fiscal year, and any notions that Robbins is not on track are false. Robbins is rising, and its success is seemingly guaranteed for future years.

SPECIAL EVENTS & TOWN HIGHLIGHTS

Lets include Sand Band!

Freedom Fest 2023

On June 30th, 2023, the **Robins** Town Hall is hosting a special event honoring our country's independence. The event will feature just a taste of what's to come at Robbins' annual Farmer's Day Festival, August 3rd through the 5th. This event will feature face painting, food trucks, fireworks, and free Mobile Axe Throwing at the Depot. You definitely do not want to miss this event. The Fest starts at 6:00 pm and ends with fireworks at 9:15 pm. So, remember to mark your calendars for the Robbins 2023 Freedom Fest!



North Moore Spring 2023 Highlights

As the North Moore Class of 2023 is galloping to the finish line, we would like to recognize their many accomplishments this past semester. Our Mustang Varsity baseball team made it all the way to the State Championships and earned the title of State Runner Ups, finishing their season with a 22-10 record. Along with the baseball team, the lady Mustangs soccer made it to the third round of the state playoffs, and the golf team earned 7th place in the 1A golfing tournament; and for the first time in the team's history, the men's tennis team made it to the third round of state playoffs. The North Moore Theater is again moving to the International Thespian Festival with an ensemble play, *PolkaDots*, and several individual acts. Also, our North Moore academics are soaring this year, with several seniors earning scholarships, including Tin Whistles, Kiwanis, Rotary, Sandhills Pride, SECU, and many more. We are so proud of our Mustangs and can't wait to see what they accomplish in the future!



EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT

April Helton



April Helton has been a fantastic employee of the Robbins Town Hall for the past four years. April is the Town Hall Utility Billing Clerk or otherwise known as the "Face of Town Hall." April is the first person you see in our facilities and knows the answers to any and every problem. If you visit us at Town Hall, you will surely receive a big welcome smile from April.

April is from Ramsuer, and before she worked in Town Hall, she was a Pharmacy Tech. "I enjoyed my job but wanted to spend more time with my family. One day, I saw a wanted ad online for a Utility Clerk in Robbins, and the rest is history," says April. April's daily duties include but are not limited to; answering all water utility billing questions, addressing complaints, working directly with Public Works, processing bulk water sales and permits, and preparing water bills for Robbins' citizens. When asked what her favorite part of the job is, April says, "I enjoy my everyday interactions with the public and the many friendships I have developed with my co-workers." When asked about her least favorite aspect of the job, she claims, "I have no complaints, except having to investigate and find the best solutions to water pipe leaks. It can be daunting for both Public Works, the citizens, and myself." April's favorite memories of working at Town Hall include attending and helping organize Robbins' many festivals that occur all year round. To pass the time when days at Town Hall are unusually slow, April organizes files, updates accounts, and, most importantly, supports local businesses by occasionally enjoying a coffee, milkshake, or pastry.

Not only is April our Utility Clerk here at Robbins, but she is also the wife to her loving husband, Travis Helton, and mother to her son Callen. April is committed to her job and her family. April is an outstanding wife, mother, and employee, and the Town Hall of Robbins is forever grateful for her work ethic and commitment to serving the public here in Robbins, NC.