

# STATE OF LEE COUNTY 2022



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# 2022 LEE COUNTY QUICK FACTS

**POPULATION: 64,138** (2021)

Historical 20 Year Population Growth: 28.4% (02-22)

Projected 20 Year Population Growth: 24.0% (22-42)

50% Within Municipal Limits (Sanford & Broadway)

50% in Unincorporated Areas

Median Age: 39.2

Population under Age 18: 23.1%

Population over Age 65: 18.1%

<b>White</b>	<b>74.7%</b>
Hispanic or Latino	20.5%
White Alone, not Hispanic or Latino	57.1%
<b>Black or African American</b>	<b>19.5%</b>
<b>American Indian and Alaska Native</b>	<b>1.4%</b>
<b>Asian</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
<b>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
<b>Two or More Races</b>	<b>2.7%</b>

**# OF HOUSEHOLDS: 26,845** (2021)

Owner Occupied: 64.8% (2020)

Language then than English Spoken at Home: 17.3 % (2020)

Land Area: 255.06 Square Miles

Population Density: 248.1 People per Square Mile

**UNEMPLOYMENT RATE: 4.2%** (May 2022)

Down from 5.2% in May 2021

**MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME: \$52,294** (2020)

**PER CAPITA INCOME: \$44,361** (2020)

**TOTAL # OF PRIVATE BUSINESSES: 1,558** (2021)

**FY 22-23 OPERATING BUDGET: \$91,286,548**

**FY 22-23 PROPERTY TAX RATE: 73.0¢**

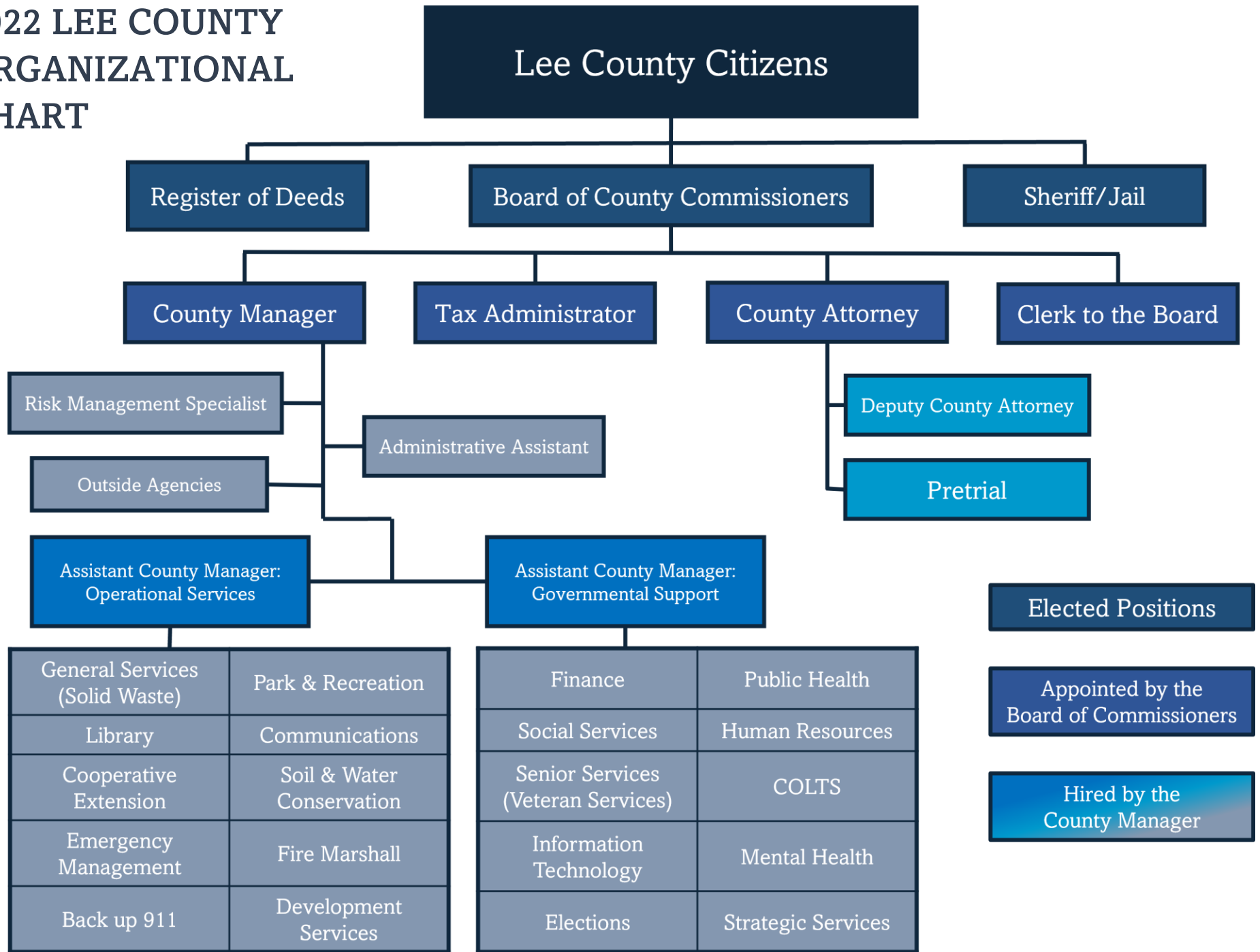
Down from 76.0¢ in FY21-22 and 77.5¢ in FY20-21

**FY 22-23 ESTIMATED TAX BASE: \$6,682,332,700**

**NEXT PROPERTY REAPPRAISAL: 2023**

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau ACS. NC Department of Commerce, NC State Demographer, NCACC

# 2022 LEE COUNTY ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## Introduction & Economic Development

The past two years have been some of the toughest that Lee County faced, but at the same time defined by unprecedented progress and growth within our community. This report will show how we are responsibly using tax dollars to better our community, all while lowering the overall tax rates. With an ever-growing population now topping 64,000 and business investment exceeding our own expectations, Lee County is, without a doubt, a premier place to live and do business within Central North Carolina.

After years of hard work, our local economic development efforts are coming to fruition. This is becoming increasingly evident with the rapid increases in sales and property tax revenues, even as our region recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. Lee County Government's relationship with the Sanford Area Growth Alliance, or SAGA, is stronger than ever. Their staff is working tirelessly to attract new companies and expand business opportunities within our County. From large corporations investing in shell buildings at Central Carolina Enterprise Park, to the revitalization efforts taking place in downtown Sanford, our citizens can see this advancement firsthand.

We are seeing thousands of new jobs being announced in our region every year. Four of the top 25 NC Job creating projects of 2021 are right here in Lee County, with Central Carolina Enterprise Park, alone, securing nearly \$350 million in new capital investments. Large corporations such as Moen, Pfizer, Coty, Tyson, Caterpillar, Bharat Forge, and Astellas have opened and/or expanded operations in Lee County in just the past few years. This economic growth in Lee County has



*Shell Buildings at Central Carolina Enterprise Park*

a clear impact on the current and future County budgets. Since 2016, the County has seen a \$1.5 billion increase in its tax base, leading to large increases in operating revenues. These revenue increases enable the County to expand investments in a budget now topping \$91 million, while simultaneously lowering the tax rates from 76 cents to 73 cents per hundred. With initial data on property reappraisals suggesting we could see a significant increase in property values, it is within reason to believe that we will reach our goal of having a tax rate in line with the state average, within the next few years.

This is a time of change, truly positive change, for Lee County. We understand that this economic and, especially, population growth is challenging on all systems, but it is necessary for us to continue to offer premier resources for our residents. We have gained many achievements over the past few years, and we look forward to the opportunities awaiting all Lee County residents.

## Healthy and Educated Citizens

The most important part of our County is you, our residents. Lee County Government strives to ensure all people, young and old, are healthy and well educated. The COVID-19 Pandemic strained all services available to achieve our education and health goals, creating new challenges which we continue to address daily.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, we are now seeing cases rise and fall as new variants emerge. Please be aware of your own health and avoid spreading the virus if you find yourself with any associated symptoms. We continue to offer vaccinations, both Pfizer and Moderna, for Lee County residents and are now administering the bivalent booster vaccine to all who are interested in receiving it.



*Covid-19 Vaccine Site in January 2021*

We continue to enhance our county programs to tackle the issues of obesity, teen pregnancy, tobacco use, opioid abuse, and mental health. Decreasing these rates in our community is vital for our long-term success and our Board of Health and Commissioners have provided significant

investment into these issues. Our Community Health Survey results will additionally help us identify any other issues affecting our residents. After the Community Health Assessment is written later this year, we will begin working to implement new programs that will address these issues.

## Cooperative Extension

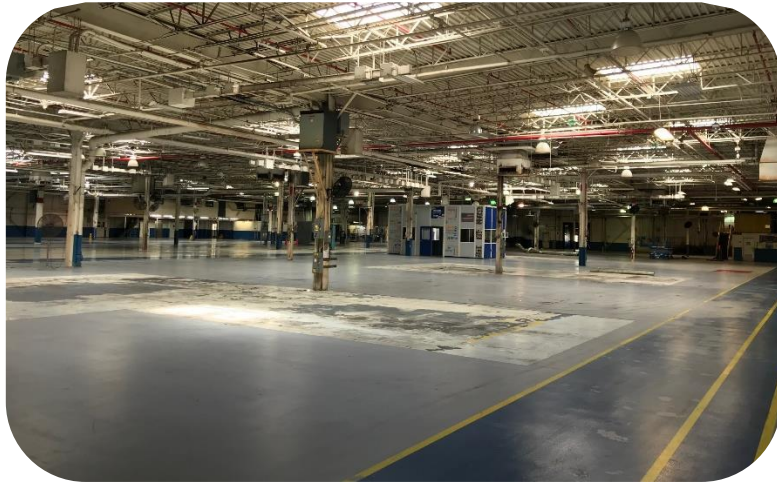
The North Carolina Cooperative Extension has been making great efforts as well to improve the health of all Lee County residents through healthy, locally grown food. The new Sanford Agriculture Marketplace Project has given the community the ability to celebrate its rich history and diversity through food and fellowship.

We have so many great local farms that deserve our support and supporting them not only puts fresh, local foods on the table, but grows the local economy too! To ensure these values continue for many generations, our 4-H program works with County youth to educate and craft our area's future leaders. The availability of fresh, local foods and the education about the importance of agriculture in our region, and the efforts to help local farms combine to improve the quality of life for all residents.

## Lee County Schools & CCCC

Lee County offers many options for a great education. Under the leadership of the Lee County Schools Board of Education, the Lee County Schools System is striving to create supportive and encouraging environments for all students, Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade. Their "more than a diploma" initiative has enabled many students to graduate with college credit and certifications that set them up for career success.

The Lee County Promise program has provided two years of free tuition at Central Carolina Community College to local graduates since 2018. At CCCC, you can see students being trained in everything from dental and veterinary medicine to automotive, robotics, and welding. We would encourage all eligible students to research their excellent programs.



*Inside of the Former Magneti Marelli Building*

A notable recent development is the purchase and transformation of the former Magneti Marelli building in Sanford. This site has been a longtime asset to our community and a joint effort between Lee County and CCCC is giving it new life as the E. Eugene Moore Manufacturing and Biotech Solutions Center. With multiple record setting manufacturing facilities being constructed in our region, it is vital that we have this site to educate and train our workforce for these great job opportunities. All these efforts combine to create endless opportunities for our residents to be healthy, well educated, and prepared for the great future that awaits Lee County.

## **Maintaining a Safe, Clean Community**

### **Sheriff's Office**

The protection of all Lee County Residents is vital for our success as a community, and it requires many County departments to work in tandem. For us in law enforcement, we strive to prevent crime in our communities through responsible policing, school programming, and targeted programs to address pertinent issues in our community, such as the opioid crisis. Our office has expanded our patrol division and implemented the use of Body Worn Cameras in the past few years, two steps necessary to increase safety in Lee County.



*Sheriff's Office supporting Back-to-School Celebrations*

Our GREAT and EKG programs operating in area schools work to prevent gun, youth, and gang violence by using evidence-based programming designed for children to

understand. We implemented new life-skill based programming to aid inmates reentering society and decrease the probability that they will reoffend in the future. We want to address the root causes of crime in our community and this youth education paired with addressing inmate reentry works to disrupt the cycle of crime in our community.

### **Emergency Management/Fire Marshall**

Outside of the sheriff's office, there are many other departments working to keep Lee County residents safe and our community clean. Our Emergency Services department has spent the last two years dedicated to the COVID-19 response, providing logistical support, and participating in the management of weekly testing sites and vaccine sites. In the days since the height of COVID-19, Emergency Services has refocused its efforts on planning, preparedness, and community risk reduction.



*Lee County Emergency Operations Center*

During the last year we have been able to complete a full revision of the Counties Comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan, a milestone in every Emergency Management Office. The Fire Marshal's office has quickly

recovered from the restrictions of COVID and ensured the counties commercial occupancies were to standard for fire safety. Making up two years of restrictions within the last 8 months.

### **Information Technology (IT)**

The County's IT department has been committed to advancing the technology available to County employees and protecting computer systems from outside threats. The cyberspace we are in today is exponentially more dangerous than it was even a few years ago. The dedication and support that we have gotten from the County Manager and the County Commissioners with their priority on technology has enabled County programs and resources to remain at normal operation throughout the early stages of the pandemic.

We were able to send a large portion of our staff home at the height of the pandemic and it was seamless to the citizens. One exciting project we have been working on recently is the launch of our new website. It is more streamlined, secure, stable, and accessible, but we will continue to work on its features based on your feedback.

### **Social Services**

The Lee County Department of Social Services has been providing vital services to our most vulnerable populations in Lee County. They have met all performance measures in place to assure that all programs and interventions have been taking place in timely manners. This applies to everything from frequently visiting foster children to processing special assistance, work first, and Food and Nutrition applications. Lee County DSS is proud of passing a recent audit of its Medicaid programming, achieving excellent ratings. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, LCDSS has stayed committed

to their mission and processed thousands of applications and assessments to assure no person is left behind in our County.

### **Senior Services/Veteran Services/COLTS**

Our Senior Services and Veteran Services departments have been working to meet the needs of these populations in Lee County. The reopening of the Lee County Enrichment Center has met the demands of over 3000 of Lee County's older adults. Throughout the pandemic, services and programs were maintained, while new offerings such as virtual programming and meal deliveries were expanded.



*Activities at Lee County Enrichment Center*

Protecting older adults and veterans in Lee County is an ongoing effort, with new fitness and health programs increasing the overall health, both physical and mental, of these populations. Specifically with Veteran Services, new “Vet Connect” monthly social groups have been created to allow veterans the opportunity to discuss common interests and stories with fellow soldiers.

Lastly, the County of Lee Transit System, or COLTS, operating under the wing of Senior Services, continues to rebuild following decreased service due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and is now averaging over 200 trips per day. Public Access Fare Passengers has increased and is averaging 1,250 trips per month.

### **General Services**

Lee County General Services is proud of the work put in by their dedicated employees throughout 2020 and 2021. They have managed and completed multiple large renovation projects on County facilities and parking lots, with the most notable being the replacement of five roofs at the Lee County Government Center.

Contained within general services, the Solid Waste employees have been committed to keeping Lee County streets clean through litter collection and the operation of convenience centers throughout the County. Over 17,000 pounds of litter has been collected since January 2022 and 38 illegal dumping citations have been issued. A decal program was also recently introduced at our convenience centers to prioritize County residents and decrease outside waste coming into Lee County. All eligible residents should make sure to apply their decals to their vehicles before bringing waste to these centers.

## **Enhancing Community Resources**

### **Development Services**

We have made it a priority to invest in our community by renovating older facilities and building new ones to suit our growing population. Multiple large projects are nearing completion and others are well underway. The government



center, home to our health department and clinic, Social Services, and Tax Administration, has undergone significant renovations to increase operational efficiency and accessibility. The historical courthouse's interior has seen significant renovation as well, and now with assistance from the NC HPO, we will be renovating the exterior of this historical building so that it can continue to be a landmark of our community for many years to come.

The Lee County Board of Elections and the Register of Deeds have moved into newly renovated buildings near the Main Courthouse so that they can better provide services to Lee County Residents. The Register of Deeds, specifically, has been approved for a new passport facility, a truly great asset for our County.

### **Parks and Recreation**



*New Tennis & Pickleball Courts at O.T. Sloan Park*

Enhancing the parks in Lee County has been a major focus in the past few years. Kiwanis Children's Park, Temple Park,

Horton Park, and O.T. Sloan Park have all seen major renovations to include new playground equipment, shelters, basketball, tennis, and pickleball courts. Ramps and crosswalks have also been completed at many County buildings and parks, creating an accessible space for all. In addition to the physical additions, we have expanded our program offerings and seen massive jumps in registrations this year alone. When compared to pre-pandemic, we have seen over 600 more participants so far in 2022.



*Design session for New Multi Sports Plex*

The largest project we are looking forward to is our multi sports plex. This site will provide much need fields and outdoor space to our County. We are moving forward with the project responsibly in this time of economic distress, to make sure our residents get the project they overwhelmingly supported in the bond referendum.

## Library Services

The Lee County Libraries has experienced a reawakening in 2022. Thousands of community members are utilizing our library facility monthly for materials, research, and more. Our Summer Reading program was a huge success with record breaking program attendance and reading incentive registrations. Staff continuously assesses and transforms library services and programming based on the needs of you, our community. Curbside pick-up is here to stay, online resources have been increased and our Broadway Branch is back open with a fresh new look.

Our highly anticipated and widely attended POP!-Con was a smashing success a few weeks ago and now we look forward to the installation of a new StoryWalk at the Kiwanis Family Park this fall. We aren't slowing down! The design process of the New Lee County Library is well underway, and we cannot wait for this new project to begin construction near O.T. Sloan Park. The library is a resource for every community member, providing education, enrichment, and enlightenment in all aspects of life. We are proud to serve our residents and look forward to all the future holds for us!



*Vendors at 2022 POP!-Con*

## Efficient Usage of Tax Dollars

The efficient and responsible usage of your tax dollars is ingrained in everything that we do in Lee County. We have invested in each of our departments so that they can continue to offer premier services, all while ensuring that they do so without waste.

To run our programs, Lee County now employs over 400 full time employees and upwards of 2-300 part time employees. Our job training ensures that each employee is provided what they need to succeed in their positions, and we pride ourselves on being a great place to work in our region.



*Lee County Employee Appreciation Lunch*

Our Tax Administration Staff were able to obtain a 99.19% collection rate for all County taxes, the highest rate known by staff. This efficient collection ensures that all programs continue to operate within the bounds of the adopted County budget. Staff has made it a priority to educate Lee County residents on the tax process and any programs that may

benefit them. They are working hard on the upcoming property reappraisal, and you should expect to see those results in early 2023.

With the guidance of our dedicated finance department, all Lee County departments continue to operate within their budgeted goals. We have great leaders in place on the Board of Commissioners and throughout County staff, and they are committed to this remaining fact for many years to come.

### **Looking Forward**

Our County's advancement has been only possible through the hard work of hundreds of Lee County employees. We appreciate your dedication throughout the pandemic and now as we are working to keep up with the unprecedented growth and change in our region.

These past few years, Lee County achieved new highs in business and job opportunities. With great planning, we foresee continuing growth over the coming decade. Our strategic plan areas of Health and Well Being, Partnerships, Arts and Culture, Education, Economic Development, and Community Safety continue to be the core of all operations moving forward. Reports are conducted quarterly to ensure all departments are working towards the goals outlined in each specific area of the approved plan. This strategic plan, along with our capital improvement, and land use plans put us on track to craft new, effective policies that align with our established goals.

Across the country there is division, but we are proud to say that we as Lee County citizens are working together to create a better tomorrow. We encourage each of you to consider participating and becoming an active citizen in your County. You can find our meeting schedules on the newly redesigned

Lee County Website for all official public County meetings, as well as opportunities to take an active part in the governance of Lee County through a number of citizen boards and commissions.



*Recognition of 2022 Lee County Young Commissioners*

Our Board of Commissioners proudly serves you, the citizens of Lee County. We will continue to dedicate our mission of creating an effective, efficient, and responsible government providing the services necessary to truly make Lee County a place to Live, Learn, Work, and Play.

Thank You for your commitment, resilience, and passion for Lee County. God Bless.

### **Visit our New Website and Follow us!**

LeeCountyNC.Gov

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Twitter: @LeeCountyNC