

# Use of Quarter-Cent Sales Tax Revenues

In May 2018, Rockingham County voters approved a quarter-cent sales tax increase to support workforce development at Rockingham Community College.

In February 2019, the college began receiving payments of approximately \$150,000 per month. Since early 2019, RCC has received \$3,922,071 in quarter-cent sales tax funds. Expenditures since that date through November 30, 2020, total \$2,976,993.

Revenues from the quarter-cent sales tax have enabled the college to begin to catch up with long-needed infrastructure and technology needs – needs that will attract students to campus, provide the training they need to join the workforce upon graduation or after more education at a four-year institution, and help them feel safe and secure while on campus.

Expenditures from quarter-cent sales tax funds are divided into two categories: Operations and Capital Projects. Operations include salaries and benefits for a Capital Projects Manager, information technology software and services, equipment, and repairs. Since early 2019, expenditures in Operations total \$1,196,716. Capital Projects include new construction, renovation of existing facilities, and large infrastructure improvements. Since early 2019, expenditures in Capital Projects total \$1,780,277. Major expenditures in each category are detailed below:

## Operations:

The majority of expenditures in Operations have been in technology, primarily for bringing academic and administrative areas up to date; this positively impacts the college's ability to deliver instruction to students and support services they need to be successful. Significant improvements have included the following:

### Software

- \$98,006 for converting paper forms from Student Services Records Office, Human Resources, and Academic Affairs to electronic forms. The work enabled faculty, staff, and students to complete all forms remotely, reducing paper but more importantly improving the efficiency of these processes.
- \$19,920 for redesigning the campus website. The redesign will launch in January 2021, replacing our current six-year-old website. The website will help prospective students identify programs and training and put them in contact with College staff to expedite the enrollment process and share funding opportunities to pay for their classes and training.

- \$11,452 for software related to the college's new mass notification system. The software allows messages to be sent quickly to faculty/staff and students in emergencies. The new system is part of the college's overall effort to provide a safer campus for students, faculty, staff, and visitors.
- \$46,489 for Amazon Web Services. This is a North Carolina Community College System Office initiative to move the community colleges' administrative computing system to the cloud. This move gives RCC an off-site, redundant computing environment, providing faculty, staff, and students access to registration, scheduling, financial data, equipment inventory, purchasing functions, and payment processing. Having data on the cloud eliminates the need for costly hardware on premises and provides automatic restoration of information should disasters occur.
- \$18,723 for anti-malware software to protect user data on desktop and mobile devices from hackers. Several community colleges have been the victim of cybersecurity attacks. At one college, the attack took out all internet-based services, compromised their network, and greatly affected their fall enrollment. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was called to investigate the cyberattack. Earlier this fall, another community college was the victim of a ransomware attack, with thieves believed to have gained access to personal information. Our college must continue to invest in protecting its network.
- \$856 for ID software for employee/student ID cards.

#### Hardware

- \$125,736 to upgrade projectors/computers/audio technology for:
  - Five classrooms on the first floor of the Humanities Building (for Anthropology, Art, Communications, Developmental Reading and English, Early Childhood Education, English, History, and Psychology).
  - Room 142 in the Administration Building, for faculty and staff training.
  - Room 112-B in the Industrial Technologies I Building (Industrial Systems).
  - Lab and classroom in the Rockingham County Farm Bureau Horticulture Building (for Agribusiness).
  - Advising Center in Whitcomb Student Center.
  - Rooms 109/116/209/211/213 in the Advanced Technologies Building (Information Technology, Accounting, Business, Rockingham County Early College High School).
- \$4,000 in Room 120 in the Advanced Technologies Building for data outlets for the college's new Cybersecurity program. This certificate program prepares students to evaluate the security weaknesses of traditional and wireless computer networks. Students are trained how to respond to and investigate cyberattacks, how to reconstruct networks once attacked, and how to protect networks from further attack. The program prepares students for the CompTIA Cybersecurity Analyst (CySA+) exam, an industry-recognized certification exam.
- \$40,123 for battery backup for up to one hour to all campus network switches in all campus buildings; in the event of a power outage, classes and college functions can continue.

- \$13,995 for additional Wireless Access Points in the Humanities Building, Advanced Technologies Building, and parking lots to improve wireless coverage on campus.
- \$14,766 for scanners so Business Office/Student Services can scan and archive student files.
- \$24,895 for equipment providing the ability to manage college devices by pushing out software updates and configuration changes to machines without the user having to physically bring the device to campus. This was necessary to keep the devices up-to-date while providing for social distancing.
- \$10,332 for faculty and staff monitor replacements.
- \$45,292 to replace the college's 20+ year-old telephone system. The new system is voice over IP and allows faculty and staff to be able to work remotely as needed.
- \$18,225 for replacement of projectors in room 105 in the Advanced Technologies Building, rooms 101, 103, and 108 in the Bishopric Lifelong Learning Center, room 210 in the Owens Health Sciences Building, rooms 103-B, 106, and 108 in the Science Building, and the Activity Room in the Whitcomb Student Center.
- \$536,822 for student, faculty, and staff computers.

The quarter-cent sales tax has enabled the college to update technology in classrooms to improve student learning. Projectors and computers for faculty and student use that were more than eight years old have been replaced, and the college can maintain a four-year upgrade cycle so students can learn on current technology – equipment and software that match what businesses and industries are using.

The new classroom technology allows for wireless connectivity for students and faculty, and greater opportunities for engaging instruction. Better video and audio are allowing our Computer-Assisted Machining students to see the intricate details of a cutter forming a metal chip, and to hear the sizzle of the cut to verify the cutter's proper speed. The college also is now using interactive white boards: touch-sensitive devices that allow our faculty to project on any subject on the surface with a computer, and directly interact with that information using their finger or a pen.

Also paid in Operations is a Capital Projects Manager, a full-time position working with the Associate Vice President for Facilities & External Affairs to coordinate the college's renovation, new construction, and repair projects. The Capital Projects manager works with architects, contractors, State Construction Office staff, NC Community College System staff, Rockingham County staff, and RCC Trustees, faculty, and staff. The manager works with these individuals to determine priority and scope of projects, write specifications, advertise for and award bids, administer contracts, oversee work, approve invoices, and close out projects once complete. The additional position has allowed the college to move quarter-cent sales tax projects much faster and more efficiently.

## **Capital Projects:**

### **Center for Workforce Development**

The major project of quarter-cent sales tax revenues is for the design and construction of the Center for Workforce Development, estimated at \$19 million. This 42,000-square-foot facility will house advanced manufacturing programs including Computer-Integrated Machining, Industrial Systems, and Electrical Systems. Other programs will include Customized Training for Industry and the Small Business Center. The proposed site for the building is located to the right of the main entrance drive, across from the Administration Building. Design is under way, and construction is tentatively planned to start in December 2021. Construction is expected to be complete by February 2023. As of Nov. 30, 2020, \$556,900 has been spent on the project, primarily for design work.

Currently, these programs are housed in Industrial Technologies I and II, buildings that were constructed in 1966 and 1979, respectively. The buildings were not constructed to house technology programs, and the instructional environment does not reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century manufacturing facilities. The new building will allow the college to train future technicians and machinists in an environment that mirrors manufacturing facilities in the Triad. Plans are being developed to renovate Industrial Technologies II to accommodate the college's Welding program; quarter-cent sales tax revenues will supplement ConnectNC bond funds for the project, scheduled for 2022-23. Discussions also are being held to renovate Industrial Technologies I.

Also, Customized Training, Human Resource Development and Small Business programs are housed currently in the Bishopric Lifelong Learning Center (BLLC). While the BLLC is one of the college's newer buildings, these programs need to be located closer to advanced manufacturing programs; such a move would create more opportunities for the county economic development team to bring potential business and industry into one building, one space, and learn how programs in the new building can support the business.

### **Campus-Wide Striping/Parking Lot & Sidewalk Improvements**

RCC began work several years ago to repair and improve its parking lots, driveways, and sidewalks. In 2020, the college expended \$441,094 to bring its parking lots into compliance with ADA requirements, re-stripe parking lots, and update signage. The work was completed in late summer 2020. Students and visitors now have better directions for parking and can feel safer and more secure. Further improvements, estimated at a cost of \$1.5 million, are planned in phases over the next five years. Our college is one of the county's best assets, and the appearance of our campus grounds contributes to the first impression for any campus visitor, including potential business and industry partners. This project, to include updating campus signage has significantly improved the campus appearance. It is important that the College not only stays current with equipment and technology, but we must "look" like an institution of high learning and training.

### **Horticulture Building- Agribusiness**

In 2020, the college expended \$216,000 in quarter-cent sales tax funds to replace a greenhouse damaged by a winter storm and renovate its existing Rockingham County Farm Bureau Horticulture Building. The work was part of an initiative to build RCC's Agribusiness Technology Program. Also, a storage building (\$140,000) is soon to be under construction to support this program and the Duke Energy TRAILS program, Environmental Planning and Development (EDP). Conversations with agricultural employers and NC Cooperative Extension agencies in Rockingham and surrounding counties revealed a need for a focus on agricultural science and training; as a result, a new program was implemented in fall 2020. The new greenhouse is 30 feet x 72 feet with 8-foot polycarbonate walls and an A-frame profile; the structure is connected to an existing building that houses a classroom and laboratory space for Agribusiness Technology and Environmental Planning and Development degree programs. This renovated space creates a modern, current facility and outdoor space to promote agricultural science education. The college recently signed a 2+2 articulation agreement with North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University for our Agribusiness Technology graduates to transfer as juniors to pursue a four-year degree in agribusiness.

### **Administration Building Roof Replacement**

In 2019, the college replaced a 30-year-old roof on the Administration Building at a cost of \$209,000. The roof had been patched numerous times in recent years. The building houses the college's computing system, critical for support of students, faculty, and staff.

### **Signage Replacement**

In 2019, the college replaced its old and fading outdoor directional signage throughout campus with larger signage providing clear identification of buildings and directions to services. Approximately \$171,000 was spent on the project, which includes three signs featuring campus maps, illuminated for viewing at night. Clear signage is especially important to prospective students and visitors, as well as first-responders to emergencies; the need for replacement was confirmed after discussions about safety and security measures with the Rockingham County Sheriff's Department.

### **Mass Notification System Replacement**

In 2019, the college replaced its outdated and faulty horn notification system with a new alert system, thereby improving the college's ability to quickly notify students, faculty, and staff throughout campus in times of emergencies. The system is just one of several means of notification; other means include email, cellphone text, and computer-desktop alarm. The project cost \$117,000. This project also followed consultations about campus safety with the Rockingham County Sheriff's Department.

### **James Library Piping Replacement**

In 2019, the college spent more than \$29,000 to abate mold and replace duct insulation in the mechanical room of James Library. The building not only contains the college's academic holdings and the county's historical collections but also houses offices and most classes of the Rockingham County Early College High School.

### **Keys Gymnasium Improvements**

In 2020, the college expended \$21,000 to replace 30 acoustical panels in the gym. The panels reduce echoes and improve the quality of sounds in the facility, which is used by students in our physical education classes and Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) Program. The gym also is used for graduation exercises, two intercollegiate athletic team practices and events (women's volleyball and men's baseball), and the annual spring Career Expo, which attracts RCC students, employers, and visitors to campus. Community organizations also use the gym.

### **Other Uses**

Small amounts of quarter-cent sales tax revenues have been added to other funding, notably ConnectNC bond funds, to enable the college to complete several large projects. These projects include additional parking lot and sidewalk improvements and replacing a leaking electrical transformer at Whitcomb Student Center.

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