

MINUTES
FOXFIRE VILLAGE COUNCIL
Monthly Work Session Agenda
January 29, 2026 ~ 5:30 PM
Village Hall Meeting Room

1. **Call to Order:** Mayor Gregorich called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Those in attendance were Mayor Pro Temp Chris Kragel, and Councilmembers Mary Gilroy, Stephen Gunn, and Kevin Robbins, and P&Z Board Chair Tashe Jarusinski. Several members of the public were in attendance.

2. **Approval of the Work Session Agenda**

Mayor Gregorich added *Fire Station Rehab Quote* to the agenda.

Councilmember Gilroy moved to approve the work session agenda as amended, seconded by Councilmember Gunn. Motion unanimously carried.

3. **Continued from Previous Work Session**

- **Social Media Policy**

The council further reviewed the draft social media policy and noted that members cannot speak officially for the village. Personal posts should be factual and respectful, with best practices including sharing official information without added commentary and avoiding blocking users. Questions were raised about whether group communications could violate open meetings law, and guidance will be requested from the attorney. Members also suggested expanding the policy to include broader media engagement. Further action was tabled pending legal guidance.

- **P&Z and BOA Board Appointments**

The council reviewed new Planning and Zoning applications, including John Stone, William Cuff, and Richard Knight, all considered qualified candidates. Current vacancies were discussed, with one opening on Planning and Zoning and several on the Board of Adjustment. Members debated board size and ETJ representation, with differing views on maintaining five members versus expanding. The council agreed to seek input from the Planning and Zoning Board and postponed decisions on composition.

Board of Adjustment applicants, Laura Bunch and Mark Dutton were also discussed. The council reached consensus to move forward with both applicants for appointment at a future council meeting.

- **Council Retreat Planning**

The council discussed plans for a future retreat, noting it will be scheduled at a later time. A list of proposed topics is being maintained, with some items potentially addressed outside of the retreat. The council will review and refine the list at the next work session, and members were invited to submit additional topics.

- **Fire Station Rehab Quotes**

The council reviewed fire station rehabilitation progress, noting insurance approval and three contractor quotes from ServPro, All Brothers Restoration, and Bruce McFadden. Two bids were similar in cost and the third one significantly higher. Concerns were raised about incomplete scope in one estimate and lack of response for clarification, while another contractor provided a more detailed assessment.

Plumbing was not clearly included in the quotes, and members emphasized it should be part of the overall contract. Flooring details and scope differences were also discussed.

The council agreed to gather more information before proceeding. A special meeting will be scheduled to review updated estimates and approve a contractor.

4. **New Discussion/ Work Items**

- **Events in Foxfire and Holiday Planning by Village**

Foxfire's 2026 event schedule was reviewed, with discussion focused on opportunities for collaboration with the property owners' group. Continued participation in the Fourth of July and tree

lighting events was supported, and the fall chili cook-off was identified as a strong potential partnership. Council further discussed the possibility of hosting an additional America 250-themed event.

- **Volunteer Recognition**

Volunteer recognition was discussed, with interest in eventually creating a formal program to honor individual contributions. It was suggested as a first step to host a volunteer appreciation event, such as a simple gathering with food and drinks.

The need to define eligibility for volunteers was discussed, with a general idea to invite all active volunteers while allowing community members to attend and show appreciation, potentially for a small fee. It was also recognized that many individuals contribute behind the scenes, making it important to identify and track volunteers as the effort develops. Ongoing

- **Foxfire Disaster Recovery Plan**

Mayor Gregorich provided copies of the existing Foxfire disaster recovery plan, noting that it is outdated. She emphasized the need for a simple, concise emergency reference that includes key contacts, phone numbers, insurance, and public safety information, and that can be easily distributed to council members and police to ensure quick access to the appropriate contacts during emergencies. She indicated it would be passed along to Councilmember Gunn and requested he provide updates on its progress. Ongoing

- **Water System Assessment and Master Plan**

Councilmember Kragel reported that work is ongoing. He and Jesse have identified three or four companies capable of completing the work and plan to send them letters requesting quotes, including pricing and availability. Timing is an important consideration due to potential water flow testing, with a preference to avoid scheduling in July or January because of weather conditions. Coordination will also be needed for work on the elevated tank, resulting in several interconnected water-related operational challenges. Ongoing

- **Part-time Maintenance Position**

Councilmember Robbins recommended hiring a dedicated part-time maintenance professional to regularly inspect Village assets, use a checklist to identify issues early, and handle or coordinate minor repairs. He feels that Village maintenance is critical, and a proactive approach would save both time and money when issues are caught early. Robbins provided multiple reasons to justify the need and council discussion ensued. Mayor Gregorich would not support hiring an employee and it was suggested to use a contractor instead for items needing attention. Councilmember Gilroy agreed and suggested a punch list be created to identify what needs to be reviewed. No action taken.

- **Village Park Signs**

Councilmember Robbins introduced the idea of replacing damaged park signage, noting that several foam signs have large holes that may be caused by either vandalism or animals like squirrels or rodents. Councilmember Gilroy added that previous signs were more durable. Robbins suggested exploring replacement options, including getting quotes, incorporating costs into the budget, and potentially switching materials. Council's input on the design will be needed before anything is finalized.

Councilmember Gunn suggested adding a Pet Waste Station at the park. Concerns were raised about who would empty and maintain such a station. No action taken.

- **Search for Village Auditor**

Councilmember Gilroy reported that the Village's current auditor is retiring, adding that qualified municipal auditors are difficult to find. She has spoken with the Village's CPA and will receive potential recommendations and also plans to contact other local municipalities for referrals.

She emphasized the importance of selecting a responsive, well-qualified auditor with strong references, as timely audits are critical. She will also work with the LGC to ensure all cost approvals and requirements are met, as the audit process is tightly regulated.

- **Purchase Order Policy**

Councilmember Gilroy explained that the proposed purchase order policy is part of a broader update to the Village's purchasing process. The change would raise the pre-approval threshold from \$100 to \$500, allowing smaller purchases without advance approval, while still requiring a purchase order to be submitted with the invoice before payment.

Purchases over \$500 would continue to require pre-approval. She emphasized that W-9 forms and complete documentation are required for all vendors, and in emergencies, work may proceed without prior approval, but all documentation must be provided before payment. The policy is expected to be brought forward for formal approval at a future meeting.

- **FY 26/27 Budget Timeline**

Councilmember Gilroy reviewed the Village’s budget timeline, noting the County is expected to approve its budget in early June, after which the Village will finalize its own to reflect any tax rate changes. She plans to begin meeting with councilmembers early to review financial data, trends, and upcoming expenses, including less frequent costs.

She emphasized the importance of early preparation, using bookkeeper Shannon Hutchens to maintain a working budget document, and providing clear justification for new or “wish list” items. The goal is to develop a more accurate budget upfront and reduce the need for amendments.

5. Planning & Zoning Board Recommendations – Board Chair Tashe Jarusinski

Planning and Zoning Board Chair Tashe Jarusinski provided updates on several items that had been delayed due to quorum issues, noting the P&Z Board is working to return to a more consistent meeting schedule

She presented revisions to the UDO landscaping section, aimed at simplifying language while supporting water conservation through recommendations for drought-tolerant plantings and natural ground cover. Discussion included encouraging the use of drought-tolerant plantings and natural ground cover, while avoiding overly restrictive requirements. The council agreed to keep plant lists as reference material outside the UDO and to maintain the language as advisory rather than enforceable. The landscaping recommendations will proceed to a public hearing.

Ms. Jarusinski was contacted by two landowners in the ETJ who were selling their homes. Both struggled to find buyers unless horses were allowed, having multiple offers contingent on equestrian use but none otherwise. One owner ultimately sold about \$30,000 below asking price. She also heard from multiple realtors, including some living and working in the ETJ, with similar concerns.

Based on this feedback, the P&Z board recommended updating equestrian standards in the EU, RF200, RA5, and RE zoning districts by reducing the minimum lot size from six to five acres and decreasing setbacks for barns, sheds, stables, hutches, and pens from 150 feet to 75 feet. The board noted that 150 feet was excessive, and feedback was requested on these proposed changes. Some councilmembers expressed opposition, noting that horses can negatively impact pastureland and that reducing acreage requirements could contribute to overgrazing and land degradation. Concerns were also raised that 75-foot setbacks for barns and other agricultural structures are too close for residential settings.

Mayor Gregorich added the proposal conflicts with long-range land use goals aimed at preserving rural character, green space, and equestrian and agricultural uses, and warned it could lower development standards, set an undesirable precedent, and be difficult to reverse. Additional concerns were raised including the potential impacts on property values, neighborhood compatibility, and zoning stability. Extensive discussion ensued regarding setback requirement and the previous zoning changes in the ETJ to RA5. Extensive discussion followed, with councilmembers expressing mixed views on the proposed changes.

Mayor Gregorich moved to deny the P&Z Board’s recommendation to reduce the minimum lot size for horses from six to five acres and decreasing setbacks from 150 feet to 75 feet. Councilmember Gilroy seconded the motion. A vote was called.

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| Gilroy | yes |
| Kragel | yes |
| Gregorich | yes |
| Gunn | yes |
| Robbins | no |

The motion carried by majority vote.

6. Public Comments – Items Listed on Agenda Only

Dan Leary – 73 N Shamrock spoke regarding the Sunshine Law, stating that its requirements should be clear based on established state and legal precedent. He suggested consulting legal counsel to determine what constitutes a violation, particularly in relation to emails and other communications

7. Adjournment

Councilmember Gunn moved to adjourn the Work Session, seconded by Councilmember Robbins and carried unanimously. The Work Session adjourned at 7:37 PM.



Lisa A. Kivett, MMC, NCCMC, CZO
Village Administrator/Clerk



Janice Gregorich
Mayor