

Comprehensive Digital Infrastructure, Records Integrity, and Transparency Modernization Assessment and Proposal

Prepared for Council Consideration

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Date: March 2026

Purpose: Council discussion, public awareness, and policy direction

Executive Summary

Foxfire Village is currently operating with critical gaps in information technology management, cybersecurity, records and data governance, internal communications, and public-facing transparency infrastructure. These gaps have real-world consequences: operational instability, increased risk to municipal records integrity, degraded council/staff coordination, reduced public access to information, and diminished community trust.

This proposal recommends a comprehensive modernization initiative appropriate to Foxfire's size, designed to accomplish three outcomes:

1. Secure and stabilize Foxfire's technology environment through professional IT governance and cybersecurity oversight.
2. Provide maximum transparency and accessibility to the public through recorded/streamed meetings, modern communications channels, and accessible digital services.
3. Create a structured municipal information ecosystem that safeguards, stores, indexes, analyzes, synchronizes, automates, and visualizes municipal data to support accountable governance and informed decision-making.

This is not "just an IT upgrade." It is a governance and integrity safeguard.

Problem Statement: Current Gaps and Impacts

1) IT Reliability, Security, and Troubleshooting Capability Gap

Foxfire has recurring issues with:

- IT security weaknesses and inconsistent administrative oversight
- Inability to troubleshoot or resolve technical failures quickly

- Email and account access issues
- Unclear system permissions and access control
- Unstructured backup and recovery practices

Impact: increased risk of service outages, data compromise, data loss, and inability to reliably produce or preserve municipal records.

2) Connectivity and Operational Continuity Gap

Foxfire experiences challenges with:

- Connectivity and communications reliability
- Inconsistent tools for continuity when systems fail

Impact: staff productivity loss, operational disruptions, and delayed response capability during critical events.

3) Internal Communications and Situational Awareness Gap

Foxfire lacks a modern internal collaboration environment that provides shared situational awareness and prevents information silos.

Current environment risks include:

- Fragmented communications across individuals and ad hoc channels
- Operational knowledge trapped in private inboxes or isolated folders
- Limited visibility across council and staff
- Inconsistent routing and accountability for approvals, tasks, and follow-through

Impact: reduced transparency, poor coordination, and increased risk that critical decisions or records cannot be traced or recovered.

4) Records Integrity and Records Management Gap

Modern municipalities are digital. Records are increasingly created and stored as:

- email
- attachments

- digital documents
- messages and electronic transactions
- vendor communications
- recordings and digital archives

Foxfire lacks a formalized digital records system that ensures:

- retention
- preservation
- controlled access
- auditable changes
- recovery capability

Impact: increased risk of records loss or deletion; reduced ability to respond to records requests; increased legal exposure; degradation of public trust.

5) Public Transparency and Meeting Accessibility Gap

Foxfire does not currently maintain consistent meeting audio/video recording, livestreaming, and searchable archives.

Impact: residents who cannot attend in person have limited access; council actions lack accessible historical record; public oversight and trust decrease.

6) Public Communications Gap

Foxfire lacks consistent, modern channels for distributing government information, including:

- robust official website communications
- public notice distribution

- community alerts
- official social media presence
- archival of public communications

Impact: residents receive less timely information; rumors fill the vacuum; public engagement suffers.

7) Accessibility and ADA Gap

Foxfire's current environment does not consistently support modern digital accessibility expectations, including:

- accessible web content and documents
- accessible meeting recordings with captions
- digital access to public information and notices

Impact: barriers to residents with disabilities and increased risk of noncompliance with evolving accessibility expectations.

Strategic Objective

Foxfire must implement a structured municipal digital ecosystem with an end state that:

- Safeguards municipal records and data against loss, deletion, and tampering
- Stores information in organized, searchable, permission-controlled systems
- Analyzes operations, spending, projects, and outcomes
- Synchronizes information so council and staff operate from shared facts
- Automates workflows to reduce administrative burden and improve traceability
- Visualizes municipal performance through dashboards and reporting for oversight

This will create institutional resilience that survives staff turnover and election cycles and ensures government remains transparent and accountable to residents.

Modernization Framework (Comprehensive)

A) Managed IT Services and Cybersecurity Oversight (Foundation Layer)

Foxfire should procure a managed IT service provider with municipal experience to deliver:

Security & Administration

- endpoint protection / managed antivirus
- security patch management
- vulnerability management
- MFA (multi-factor authentication) across accounts
- centralized access control and permissions
- secure account lifecycle management (onboarding/offboarding)

Resilience

- structured backups (including immutable backups where feasible)
- disaster recovery planning and recovery testing
- incident response plan

Operational Support

- help desk support and troubleshooting
- network monitoring
- device management
- email administration

Outcome: stable systems, reduced downtime, real cybersecurity posture, and recoverable records.

Estimated cost: \$6,000 – \$18,000 annually (based on service scope and user count)

B) Internal Collaboration, Knowledge Management, and “Flat Communications”

Foxfire should establish a centralized collaboration environment for staff and council that enables:

Secure Internal Communications

- standardized official communication channels
- searchable archives
- clear permission roles

Knowledge Management Repository

Centralized libraries for:

- policies, procedures, and standards
- contracts, vendor files, certificates of insurance
- capital project folders
- finance and audit documentation
- meeting packets and supporting materials
- infrastructure documentation and maintenance history

Institutional Memory

- version control and change tracking
- consistent naming standards and folder taxonomy
- retention and legal hold capability where appropriate

Flat Transparency and Shared Awareness

- shared operational dashboards, project trackers, and action item logs
- shared calendars and task routing
- documented ownership of responsibilities and deadlines

Outcome: no more information silos; council and staff operate from shared facts; continuity through personnel changes.

Common platforms: Microsoft 365 Government or Google Workspace Government (or equivalent)

C) Records Management and Integrity Controls (Governance Layer)

Foxfire should adopt formal records controls appropriate to municipal operations:

Records Policy and Retention

- written records retention protocol aligned to NC requirements
- standardized data classification (public, internal, confidential)

- defined custody and access controls

Auditability and Integrity

- logging of access, deletion attempts, changes
- administrative separation of duties (no single person holds “keys to everything”)
- defined escalation path for disputes and holds

Public Records Workflow

- tracking intake
- deadline tracking
- searchable retrieval
- defensible production and response history

Outcome: records are protected, findable, recoverable, and defensible.

D) Public Meeting Recording, Livestreaming, and Archiving (Transparency Layer)

Foxfire should implement a permanent system providing:

- high-quality audio capture (primary requirement)
- video recording
- livestream capability
- automated archiving
- searchable library indexing
- caption capability for accessibility

Outcome: permanent public record, improved public access, reduced disputes over “what was said.”

Estimated one-time cost: \$3,800 – \$9,000

Annual hosting/streaming: \$300 – \$800

E) Village Website Modernization + Digital Public Notices (Public Interface Layer)

Foxfire should modernize the website to become the central “public information hub,” including:

- ADA-accessible design and templates
- meeting calendar
- meeting packets repository
- recordings archive
- public notices library
- searchable documents
- online forms where appropriate (requests, permits, etc.)
- integration with alerts and social platforms

Estimated cost: \$2,000 – \$6,000 redesign

Annual hosting/platform: \$500 – \$1,200

F) Official Social Media and Public Communications Operations

Foxfire should establish and consistently operate official channels, including at minimum:

- Facebook (high local penetration)
- optional: Instagram and X (as needed)

Key practices:

- consistent posting schedule for meetings/notices
- emergency updates protocol
- cross-posting from website public notice feed
- archived posts for accountability

Cost: minimal; primarily staff time

G) Data Ecosystem Development (Decision Support Layer)

Foxfire should build a structured data approach that evolves over time:

Data Domains

- finance (budgets, expenditures, vendors)

- capital projects (status, inspections, milestones)
- infrastructure (roads, assets, maintenance schedules)
- service requests and complaints
- meeting actions and follow-through

Synchronization

- link documents to decisions
- link vendor payments to contracts and scope
- link projects to inspections and timelines

Automation

- routine reporting
- alerts for deadlines (COIs, renewals, bids, contracts)
- action item routing from meetings

Visualization

- dashboards for council oversight
- monthly operational reporting for transparency
- project scorecards that can be shared publicly

Outcome: governance based on facts and traceability, not memory, rumor, or fragmented documents.

Cost–Benefit Analysis (First-Year Range)

Category	Estimated Cost
Managed IT services	\$6,000 – \$18,000
Meeting recording/streaming system (one-time)	\$3,800 – \$9,000
Website modernization	\$2,500 – \$7,000

Estimated first-year total: \$13,100 – \$36,000

Benefit Summary

Operational

- reduced downtime and staff time wasted on technical failures
- professional troubleshooting
- stable communication and continuity

Governance and Integrity

- protected records with recoverability
- transparent workflows and traceable decisions
- preserved institutional knowledge

Public Trust and Transparency

- recorded meetings and accessible archives
- timely public communications
- fewer rumors, more facts

Accessibility

- improved ADA-aligned access to public information and meetings
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Risk Calculus: No Action vs. Modernization

Scenario 1: No Action Taken (Status Quo)

Risk increases over time.

Costs are often “invisible” until a major incident occurs.

Operational Risk

- recurring outages and inability to troubleshoot
- staff inefficiency and delayed response

Cybersecurity Risk

- higher probability of compromise, ransomware, or account takeover

Records Integrity Risk

- continued vulnerability to records loss/deletion

- inability to restore records reliably
- diminished defensibility in public records disputes

Transparency Risk

- continued lack of meeting archives and accessible records
- reduced public oversight and confidence

Institutional Knowledge Risk

- loss of continuity with staff turnover
- repeated mistakes and reinvented work

Political Risk

- ongoing public frustration and continued skepticism
- increased conflict over “what happened” due to lack of auditable systems

Scenario 2: Implement Modernization (Reform and Safeguards)

Risks are controlled and reduced.

Systems become resilient and auditable.

Operational Stability

- managed support, predictable performance, reduced downtime

Security Posture

- modern controls, monitoring, and recovery planning

Records Integrity

- controlled retention, audit trails, recoverability, defensible compliance

Transparency

- meeting archives, digital public notices, accessible information

Council and Staff Alignment

- shared situational awareness and flat communications
- reduced silos, improved collaboration

Public Trust

- visible reforms that structurally prevent future failures
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Implementation Plan (Phased, Practical, and Fast)

Phase 1 (0–60 Days): Stabilize and Protect

- select managed IT provider
- implement MFA, baseline security, backups
- finalize internal collaboration platform structure
- establish records retention and access controls (minimum viable policy)

Phase 2 (60–120 Days): Transparency Infrastructure

- install meeting audio/video system
- publish meeting archive process
- establish official social accounts and posting SOP
- launch website improvements and public notice hub

Phase 3 (120–180 Days): Data Ecosystem and Automation

- create core dashboards (budget, vendor payments, projects)
 - build standardized monthly reporting
 - implement workflow routing and records request tracker
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Proposed Council Direction

Consensus to solicit proposals and return to council with costed options for managed IT services, meeting recording/streaming capability, website modernization, and internal collaboration/records management modernization to improve transparency, operational reliability, cybersecurity, and public accessibility.

Option B (Adopt Framework + Assign Lead):

Adopt the Digital Infrastructure and Transparency Modernization Framework and designate a councilmember to designate an implementation lead and return within 30 days with a phased implementation plan and vendor options.”

Why This Matters to Foxfire Residents

Residents deserve a government where:

- records are protected and recoverable
- meetings are accessible and archived
- public information is easy to find
- communications are timely and official
- decisions and spending can be traced and understood

This modernization initiative establishes institutional safeguards so Foxfire operates with transparency, accountability, and resilience—now and in the future.