

Subject: Transparency Practices Needed in Foxfire Village

Dear Council Members,

Nothing Builds Trust Like Transparency

Transparency is not a courtesy — it is a basic responsibility of public service.

When minutes are not posted, agenda packets lack supporting documents, and meetings are not video recorded, residents are left without a clear public record of the decisions being made on their behalf.

These are not technical problems or budget issues.

They are basic transparency practices used by municipalities across North Carolina — practices Foxfire residents should reasonably expect from their Village government.

1. Complete Agenda Packets — No Paper Handouts at Meetings

The Problem with Paper-Only Handouts

Any document prepared for a public meeting becomes a public record the moment it is created.

Because these documents are public records, they should be listed, attached, and preserved as part of the official agenda packet — a standard practice in most towns. When handouts are not listed, attached, or posted, residents have no way to know they exist. This creates hidden records that the public cannot access, auditors cannot verify, and regulators cannot review — weakening transparency, accountability, and the Village's audit trail.

When documents are distributed only during a meeting, information used to make public decisions never becomes part of the official record.

Paper-only handouts create a two-tier system of information — one for those at the table and one for everyone else.

If the public cannot see the document and the council cannot easily reference it later, the handout serves no legitimate public purpose and keeps information used in public decision-making outside the public record and out of public view.

The Solution

All meeting documents should be included in the agenda packet and posted with the agenda before the meeting. This is a basic transparency practice.

2. Minutes Posted Promptly

Council minutes were last posted on the Village website on December 9, 2025, when the current members took office.

Minutes are the official record of motions, votes, and decisions. Without them, residents, auditors, and oversight agencies cannot easily verify what actions their elected officials have taken.

Posting minutes promptly helps ensure the public record remains complete, accessible, and verifiable.

3. Video Recorded Meetings

Residents have been waiting for years for the Village to take responsibility for recording council and zoning meetings.

Instead, the issue has been delayed with shifting explanations — including references to needing a “cost-benefit analysis” and placing the matter in the **Long-Range Plan** without any action taken.

Meanwhile, for nearly four years, a volunteer group of residents has provided the only video record of council meetings.

That volunteer crew plans to retire this summer.

Unless the Village begins recording its own meetings, residents will lose the only consistent and accessible record of council proceedings.

Recording meetings is inexpensive and widely used across North Carolina municipalities. It does not require a study or long-range planning effort.

4. Meaningful Public Comment

Some North Carolina towns use agenda sections titled “**Informal Discussion and Public Comment**” or even “**Open Forum.**”

Those titles clearly signal that residents are welcome to share their thoughts with their elected officials.

Foxfire’s agenda, however, includes fine print that restricts how residents may speak during public comment:

- Public Comment Period – ***Comments limited to items not listed on this agenda***
- Public Comment Period – ***Comments on items listed on this agenda***

A small change in agenda language would send a clear message that the council values open communication and welcomes input from the people it represents.

Public comment should not come with restrictive fine print attached. Removing it would demonstrate a clear commitment to open communication with residents.

5. Agenda E-Blasts & Consistent Meeting Notifications

Have we stopped sending meeting agendas to residents — or is someone now deciding which meetings residents are told about?

Residents have noticed that sometimes agenda e-blasts are sent and sometimes they are not. When communication about public meetings is inconsistent, it raises concerns that information may be selectively shared.

Agenda e-blasts are not legally required. However, once the Village chooses to provide this courtesy, residents should be able to rely on it consistently.

Who decides which meetings or agenda notices are sent through the town’s e-blast system? Has the council formally approved any change to this practice?

The council is the governing body responsible for policies related to resident communications and meeting notices. These decisions should not be made informally by any one or two individuals.

If the process has changed, the council should discuss it openly and clarify the policy.

I understand the council is extremely busy with the budget, the pool, the fire contract, and other priorities.

I understand that these practices **are not legally required**. Many municipalities still provide them because they recognize that transparency and clear communication benefit both residents and local government.

Transparency Isn't Complicated

These are small, straightforward issues that could likely be resolved quickly if placed on a future meeting agenda.

Agenda packets, minutes, and meeting recordings should be posted consistently so residents do not have to file public-records requests simply to understand what their council is doing.

Transparency isn't complicated.

It simply requires getting the basics right.

North Carolina Public Records Law (N.C.G.S. §132-1)

Defines public records as documents made or received in connection with the transaction of public business.

Sincerely,

Sandy Cameron

Foxfire Village Resident