1. Stavely Fire and Emergency Services

The Town of Stavely and the MD of Willow Creek have worked together to provide fire and emergency services for many years.

In 2020, five municipalities entered into a regional agreement coordinating emergency response, mutual aid, training and equipment across five fire departments.

What residents may not realize is how much this partnership benefits Stavely taxpayers.

For approximately 15 years, the MD has provided the majority of the Stavely Fire Department's direct annual funding, contributing approximately $117,000 compared with the Town's $30,000. This is because the majority of fire calls are to MD of Willow Creek citizens and properties and as such the budget reflects the proportion of costs associated with response into each community.

The MD also owns and maintains all of the firefighting trucks and equipment.

Under a separate agreement dating back to 2010, the MD owns 63.55% of the jointly used municipal complex and contributes that same percentage toward its operating and maintenance costs. The Town and MD also share certain additional fire-service costs under their Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Agreement.

Over the past two years, the department has responded to an average of approximately one emergency call per month within Town limits.

Providing an independent fire service, including purchasing equipment, maintaining facilities, training firefighters and managing operations, would place a substantial financial burden on Stavely taxpayers.

Why the Management Arrangement Changed

The Town's 2008 Fire Bylaw established responsibilities involving Town Council, the Stavely Fire Chief and the regional fire-service structure. However, the operational management relationship between the Town and the MD had not been clearly formalized.

Council recognized that managing a fire department requires specialized expertise and resources beyond those normally available within a small municipality's administration.

The same firefighters and equipment serve both municipalities, and the Town of Stavely Council believed they should operate under one consistent management structure, regardless of where an emergency occurs.

On July 23, 2026, the Town and MD Council approved a two-year agreement, with the possibility of a one-year extension, formally placing operational management with the MD of Willow Creek.

The MD now oversees staffing, training, leadership, emergency response and equipment readiness, while Council retains responsibility for approving the Town's annual financial contribution.

Importantly, this arrangement has not substantially changed the Town's annual operating contribution. Stavely will contribute $30,000 in 2026, $30,900 in 2027 and $31,827 in 2028, with existing regional cost-sharing obligations continuing.

Fire Staffing, Training and Operational Readiness

The MD has publicly reported that department membership has grown from 7 firefighters on July 23 when the MD assumed responsibility for the Fire Department to 24 firefighters and two junior members.

The department includes 12 certified structural firefighters, six certified fire officers, four fire and emergency services instructors and three primary care paramedics.

Training continues in vehicle extrication, water rescue and practical firefighting skills, with advanced structural firefighter certification training scheduled to begin in January 2027. We encourage all residents to follow the Stavely Fire Department Facebook page which provides frequent updates on the training, response and accomplishments of our local fire department.

Council appreciates the dedication of our volunteer firefighters and the MD's continued partnership in providing fire protection for Stavely and the surrounding area.

2. Stavely Municipal Library Board

Council recognizes the important role of the Stavely Municipal Library and appreciates the volunteers who contribute their time to its operation.

Council's Role and Responsibilities

Under Alberta's *Libraries Act*, the Library Board is a separate corporation responsible for managing and operating the library. Council retains specific legislative responsibilities, including appointing Board members, receiving annual budgets and financial reports, and accepting or disallowing applicable Library Board bylaws.

The Town contributes $8,000 annually to the Stavely Municipal Library and $4,250 to the Chinook Arch Regional Library System, for a total of $12,250 in taxpayer funding.

Council has a responsibility to ensure public funds are allocated responsibly while respecting the Board's independence in managing library operations.

Residency Policy

In April 2025, Council adopted Policy No. 02-06, requiring Council-appointed board and committee members to reside within the Town of Stavely or MD of Willow Creek.

The policy applies to several municipal boards and committees, not just the Library Board. Existing members were permitted to complete their appointments, and no appointments were terminated as a result of the policy's adoption.

Alberta Ombudsman Review

We note that the Alberta Ombudsman has reviewed the Policy and acknowledged Council's authority to establish the policy and its powers under the *Libraries Act* to appoint and remove Library Board members. The office also noted that Council is not obligated to provide reasons for the policy or criteria for appointing or removing Board members.

The office indicated that any future application of the policy resulting in a final administrative decision could be brought forward for review if concerns about administrative fairness arise.

Library Board Bylaw Review

Separately, Administration requested that the Library Board review its bylaws, last adopted in 2020, following changes to provincial legislation affecting municipal library boards.

The purpose of the review was to ensure the bylaws remained consistent with current requirements under Alberta's *Libraries Act* and associated regulations.

This was a routine legislative compliance matter intended to ensure the Library Board's governing documents remained current.

The bylaw review and Council's residency policy were separate initiatives undertaken for different purposes.

Treatment of Residents and Board Members

Council acknowledges the concerns raised regarding the treatment of residents and volunteer Board members who question municipal decisions.

Council has been provided with correspondence relating to these concerns and is aware of the matters raised.

Residents and Board members have the right to ask questions, express concerns and disagree with municipal decisions. Disagreement alone does not constitute misconduct.

Council's responsibility is to consider these matters fairly, make decisions in accordance with legislation and municipal policies, and maintain respectful interactions with everyone involved.

3. Council and CAO Authority, Transparency and Accountability

Council and Administration Responsibilities

Under Alberta's Municipal Government Act, Council is responsible for establishing municipal policy, approving budgets and making decisions through resolutions and bylaws. The Chief Administrative Officer manages municipal operations, provides recommendations and implements Council's decisions.

Councillors independently consider Administration's recommendations and may approve, amend, defer or reject them. Administration does not exercise Council's decision-making authority.

Public Access to Council Meetings and Information

Council meetings are open to the public, except where legislation permits closed sessions.

Council decisions are recorded in meeting minutes, and municipal information is available through the Town's website or Administration Office.

Alberta Ombudsman Review

We confirm that the Alberta Ombudsman's Office has reviewed Sections 193, 197 and 208(1)(a) of the Municipal Government Act and Sections 8 and 9 of the Town's Procedural Bylaw #899, and confirmed that there is no requirement to provide Council agendas in advance of meetings.

The Ombudsman also noted that meeting minutes are intended to record decisions rather than detailed discussions and found the Town's practice of excluding closed-session discussions from its minutes reasonable and consistent with typical municipal procedures.

Transparency and Accountability

Council recognizes the right of residents to question municipal decisions and seek independent review through established oversight processes.

However, the submission of a complaint does not, in itself, establish wrongdoing by Council or Administration.

Council remains committed to responsible governance, transparency and accountability in accordance with applicable legislation.

4. Municipal Lots and Property

The Town of Stavely does not currently own residential lots available for sale or development.

Properties previously sold by the Town are now privately owned. While Council recognizes that vacant lots can affect housing availability, municipal revenue and community growth, the Town cannot require private landowners to develop their properties within a particular timeframe unless there is a legal basis to do so.

Council continues to consider opportunities to encourage development and support future growth within the municipality.

5. Proposed New Town Office

The existing Town Office is more than 100 years old and presents ongoing challenges involving maintenance, accessibility and long-term operational needs.

Approximately $90,000 has been invested in the building over the past decade. Despite these investments, its age and condition raise concerns about the financial practicality of continued renovations.

Accessibility is a significant concern. Council Chambers is located on the second floor, with no elevator access. This creates barriers for residents with mobility limitations who wish to attend Council meetings and participate in municipal government. Providing accessible access would likely require substantial structural modifications and significant financial investment.

In 2025, Council authorized the sale of the former municipal office property as part of its efforts to reduce the Town's Asset Retirement Obligations and long-term financial liabilities.

Proceeds from that sale were applied toward the purchase of land west of the Stavely Museum. The acquisition was intended to expand municipal reserves and prevent residential development in that particular area.

Although Council minutes referenced the possibility of a future Town Office, no formal approval to proceed with construction has been granted.

Council continues to evaluate the existing building's condition, accessibility and long-term suitability while setting aside available capital funding for future infrastructure needs.

Any proposal for a new Town Office would require further consideration of costs, funding sources, municipal priorities and opportunities for public input before a decision is made.

Council's responsibility is to plan for the municipality's future while managing public funds responsibly.