

January 16, 2026

Dear Mayor, Council, and Administration,

The Town's current "wait and see" approach following the resignation of twelve experienced firefighters is putting public safety at risk. This is not a situation that can be managed slowly or through long term restructuring alone.

I've read the town's recent press release about adding new management positions. While that may address administrative issues down the road, it does nothing to fix the immediate problem, a work environment that has clearly broken down to the point where twelve firefighters felt they had no choice but to walk away.

If the goal is to get these firefighters back on duty quickly and restore reliable fire protection, Council needs to take direct and decisive action. I am asking Council to consider the following three immediate steps.

First, the Fire Chief should be placed on non disciplinary administrative leave while the workplace issues are investigated. The firefighters have been clear that leadership conduct is at the centre of the problem. Standard practice is to remove the subject of the complaint from the workplace temporarily. This is not a finding of guilt, it's a step to reduce tension and allow people to return to work in a neutral environment.

Second, the town should immediately appoint an external interim Fire Chief or some sort of operational lead. Waiting months to hire a new Director of Protective Services does nothing to address the current crisis. An interim leader from outside the organization, with no involvement in past conflicts, would give firefighters a professional and safe reporting structure and allow them to return to service right away.

Third, Council needs to take a more direct role in oversight. The mayor has acknowledged that the 2021 Montana report was a workplace assessment, yet five years later its recommendations remain largely unaddressed. Leaving this entirely in the hands of the same administrative structure that oversaw the decline has clearly not worked. I suggest a council led fire service oversight committee made up of three councillors and a firefighter representative to track and ensure implementation of the outstanding recommendations.

The town's current plan appears to rely on adding more management layers between firefighters and the CAO. That does not solve the core problem. What the community needs right now is not more management positions, but the twelve trained firefighters we already rely on back on the trucks.

If the source of conflict is removed and temporary leadership in place, Council can restore fire protection for Sackville and the surrounding areas within days, not months. I urge Council to act quickly and put public safety ahead of protecting a system that is no longer working.

Respectfully,

Kenneth Hicks

Former Councillor, Municipality of Tantrammar

