Fire Services Advisory Committee

Thursday September 17, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.
Council Chambers
181 Coldbrook Village Park Drive

A G E N D A

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call and Land Acknowledgement

3. Amendments to the Agenda

4. Approval of the Agenda

5. Disclosure of Conflict-of-Interest Issues

6. Approval of Minutes
   a. June 25, 2026 — Page 2

7. New Business

a.	Fire Engagement Session – *Presentation*	Andrea Hyslop	Page 5
b.	False Alarm By-Law	Haley Hutt	
c.	Search and Rescue (SAR) Resources – *Presentation*	Valley SAR	
d.	Emergency Service Providers Fund (ESPF) Regional Funding	Haley Hutt	
e.	Fire Scene Rehabilitation – *Presentation*	Haley Hutt	
f.	Mutual Aid Agreement	Haley Hutt	

8. Roundtable

9. Date of Next Meeting
   a. December 17, 2026

10. Adjournment

Accommodations are available for this meeting: please submit your request at www.countyofkings.ca/accommodationsrequest

Land Acknowledgement

The Municipality of the County of Kings is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral, unceded, and current territory of the Mi'kmaq Peoples. The Municipality of the County of Kings is a neighbour to Annapolis Valley First Nation and Glooscap First Nation, as well as a diverse urban and rural Indigenous population. We are all treaty people and commit to upholding the Peace and Friendship Treaties and working towards reconciliation in all areas of the Municipality.

FIRE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, June 25, 2026 at 7:00 pm

DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting, Date and Time

A meeting of the Fire Services Advisory Committee (FSAC) was held on Thursday, June 25, 2026, at 7:00 pm in the Council Chambers at 181 Coldbrook Village Park Drive.

Attending

FSAC Members

David Watson, Halls Harbour Fire Chief
James Redmond, New Minas Fire Chief
Jason Stevens, Port Williams Fire Chief
Jeff Skaling, Canning Fire Chief
Jeff Veinot, Springfield Fire Chief
Luke Redden, Berwick Fire Chief
Shawn Carey, Aylesford Fire Chief
Scott Hamilton, Kentville Fire Chief
Tristan Redden, Greenwich Fire Chief
Troy Bruce, Kingston Fire Chief
Wayne Johnstone, Waterville Fire Chief
Councillor Peter Allen – East
Councillor Riley Peckford – West

Municipal Staff

Andrea Hyslop – Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Haley Hutt – Emergency Services Coordinator
Terry Brown - Manager of Inspection & Enforcement Division
Cyenna Link – Administrative Assistant/Recording Secretary

Absent

Councillor Robbie Hiltz – Central
Paul Maynard, Hantsport Fire Chief
Todd Crowell, Wolfville Fire Chief

Public

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1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

2. **Roll Call**

The Recording Secretary took meeting attendance.

3. **Land Acknowledgement**

Councillor Allen, Vice-Chair, read the Land Acknowledgement per Policy ADMIN-01-025: Land Acknowledgement.

4. **Amendments to the Agenda**

Councillor Allen requested that a moment of silence for late Kentville firefighter Joel Neily, be added to the agenda after item 7 – Approval of the Minutes.

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5. Approval of the Agenda

On motion of Chief Hamilton and Councillor Peckford, that the Fire Services Advisory Committee approve the June 25, 2026, meeting agenda as amended.

The question was called on the motion.
Motion carried.

6. Disclosure of Conflict-of-Interest Issues

There were no conflict-of-interest issues disclosed.

7. Approval of Minutes

a. February 12, 2026

On motion of Chief Carey and Chief Stevens, that the minutes of the Fire Services Advisory Committee meetings held on February 12, 2026 be approved as circulated.

The question was called on the motion.
Motion carried.

8. Moment of Silence

Terry Brown, Manager of Inspections and Enforcement, offered remarks in honour of Joel Neily, of the Kentville Volunteer Fire Department. The Committee observed a moment of silence in recognition of his service and memory.

9. New Business

a. Introduction of Emergency Services Coordinator

Mr. Brown Introduced Ms. Haley Hutt, the new Emergency Services Coordinator, to the Committee.

b. Fire Review and Upcoming Expectations

Mr. Brown provided an update on the Municipality's responsibility regarding fire protection services reviews and upcoming updates from the Province.

c. Municipal Honorariums and Designates for FSA Committee

Ms. Haley Hutt, Emergency Services Coordinator, reminded the Committee members to update delegate information for Accounts Payable and contact lists.

d. Emergency Service Providers Fund (ESPF)

Ms. Hutt informed the Committee that the individual funding stream for the Emergency Service Providers Fund is now open until July 31, 2026.

e. HazMat Update

Mr. Brown provided a follow up on the HAZMAT team. He noted that the Municipality was successful in their grant funding application.

f. Discussion on Fire Department Signoff for Developments

Chief Skaling asked for more clarification on what is needed from fire departments for the Municipality in regard to development reviews and fire safety. Staff provided clarity on the responsibilities of the Municipal Building Inspectors versus the Fire Chiefs in relation to developments.

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10. Roundtable

Mr. Brown extended his appreciation of the community of firefighters across the County of Kings when coming together in times of need, both in times of mutual aid and times of loss.

Chief Skaling asked staff if were possible for the County to group register the fire departments with other Municipalities that they provide services to or if it is the responsibility of the individual departments to do so in relation to MGA s. 294. Staff clarified that it is incumbent upon the individual fire departments to register with other Municipalities.

11. Comments from the Public

None.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of FSAC will be on Thursday, September 17, 2026, at 7:00 pm.

13. Adjournment

On motion of Chief Carey and Chief Skaling, there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Approved by:

Fire Services Advisory Committee **Month/Day/Year**

DRAFT

FIRE SERVICES CONSULTATION

WHAT WE HEARD

MUNICIPALITY of the COUNTY of KINGS

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INTRODUCTION

Fire services play a critical role in the safety, resilience, and well being of our communities. Across Kings County this work is largely carried out by dedicated volunteers who give their time, energy and expertise to respond when it matters most.

On April 16, 2026, The Municipality of the County of Kings hosted a dedicated engagement session with fire service leadership, with 45 participants, representing the 13 fire departments from across the Municipality.

This session brought together Chiefs, Deputy Chiefs, and fire service representatives to share their perspectives, experiences and insights during a time of expected change within the fire service landscape. The purpose of this session was to seek meaningful input on the Province's Fire Service Modernization recommendations ("recommendations"). This engagement was designed to allow participants to speak candidly about opportunities, challenges and unanswered questions relating to the recommendations. Participants were provided with copies of the recommendations along with a copy of Bill 186 to support informed and meaningful discussion throughout the session.

This report reflects what we heard during this session. It is intended to capture the key themes, concerns and ideas shared by fire service leadership and to help inform ongoing discussions at both the municipal and provincial levels. As these recommendations continue to take shape the Municipality recognizes the importance of creating space for local fire leadership to reflect on what these changes could mean in practice, both in their departments and for the communities they serve.

There were five tables for participants to provide feedback. Each table focused on a key question designed to explore different aspects of the proposed recommendations and to capture both immediate reactions and long-term implications.

The topics discussed were:

1. Outstanding questions for the Province following a review of the recommendations
2. The future of fire services in the Province of Nova Scotia
3. What the Province should consider when advancing the recommendations
4. The role Council can play in supporting fire departments through provincial change
5. Positive elements or opportunities identified within the current recommendations

On the following pages you will find an overview of the common themes emerging throughout the entire conversation and a summary of the considerations heard. At the end of the report, there is an overview of next steps that will be taken to respond to use this feedback from the engagement session to support future conversations.

OVERARCHING THEMES

Our fire departments spoke, and here is what we heard most clearly. The following priorities reflect the shared aspirations, concerns, and ideas expressed by the fire service:

1. The need for local voices and meaningful engagement

Fire leadership wants the opportunity to be actively and meaningfully involved in shaping the future of fire services. Participants expressed concern that engagement from the province to date was limited and emphasized the importance on on-going, two-way dialogue.

There is a strong desire for:

- Continuous consultation
- Consultation specific to rural departments
- A collaborative approach to decision making
- Recognition of front-line experience and expertise

2. Sustainability of the volunteer model with proposed changes

Across all tables there was the growing concern that the current volunteer-based model is under strain and additional workload may lead to an unsustainable future for the volunteer fire services.

Participants highlighted:

- Concerns about increasing call volumes, call complexity, and service expectations
- Time demands placed on volunteers
- Challenges balancing volunteer fire service work and family and full-time employment requirements

3. Recruitment and retention challenges

Closely tied to sustainability, recruitment and retention emerged as a critical issue throughout all discussions

Key concerns included:

- Difficulty attracting new members
- Retaining experienced firefighters
- Barriers related to training, time commitment and expectations

4. Financial clarity

Members expressed concern around the uncertainty of financial responsibility. The lack of clear funding frameworks could place additional strain on already stretched departments.

Participants were looking for:

- Clear understanding of who will bear the cost of changes
- Assurances that municipalities and departments will be supported
- Long-term financial sustainability, not short-term fixes

5. Volunteer capacity and administrative burdens

Many participants expressed concern about the increased administrative and reporting requirements that may result from modernization

This included:

- Additional responsibilities for fire chiefs and leadership
- Time required for compliance, reporting and training
- Risk of burnout with already stretched volunteers.

6. Support for chiefs and leadership

Fire chiefs were identified as carrying a growing burden both operationally and administratively.

Participants highlighted:

- The need for additional supports and resources
- Recognition of the complexity of the role
- Concern about long-term sustainability of leadership positions

7. Realistic implementation and timelines

Many felt that the proposed timelines may not reflect the realities of a volunteer-based system, and that getting it right is more important that getting it done quickly.

Feedback included:

- The need for a phased and realistic approach
- Time to adapt, train, and build capacity
- Avoiding rushed or top-down changes

8. Flexible rural approach

There was concern about the potential for a “one-size-fits-all” model that may have been heavily influenced by urban departments.

Participants emphasized:

- The unique situations of rural and volunteer departments
- Variability in capacity, geography, and call volume
- The need for flexibility in how standards is involved
- A fear of losing community connection that is a centrepiece of rural departments.

9. **<u>An openness to some change, with the right supports</u>**

Many discussions highlighted a willingness to evolve and improve systems, seeing the benefits of future planning and strengthening the fire service, but with the caveat that these changes:

- Include meaningful engagement with rural communities
- Are given adequate funding and support plans to ensure longevity and success
- The setting of realistic expectations for volunteers.

TABLE 1 – WHAT OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE

When asked what outstanding questions remain after reviewing the Provincial recommendations participants raised several important considerations, primarily focused on financial impacts and financial decision making. The below summarizes themes and the considerations that emerged from this table.

Considerations:

- Want clarity on who makes decisions, if the Municipality will oversee the decisions, will decisions be made at the municipal level, or by fire departments.
- Greater clarity on Bill 186 and the requirements for municipal fire inspectors.
- How will the proposed recommendations change the financial situation for fire departments. The Municipality currently funds cost through the general rates for operational costs and area rates for capital costs, the budgets are fair and departments are well funded.
- Recommendations come at a cost; Province will need to show fire departments they have money to support the implementation so people will get on board.
- Provincial recommendations seem to be focused on urban models rather than considering rural needs. Consultation with rural communities should be considered.
- Has the Province considered the work-life balance of volunteer departments in creating the recommendations? Volunteers are already struggling to meet requirements.
- Retention benefits from a rural lens, e.g., free gym memberships may work in urban areas but are harder to implement and less beneficial in rural areas.
- Province should consider improved access for decontamination; it would make a lot of requirements more attainable for departments.
- How will training be tracked, and will consideration be given to experienced members.

TABLE 2 – THE FUTURE OF FIRE SERVICES

At this table, participants were asked where they see fire services in the future. They communicated a strong commitment to maintaining high-quality, community-based fire services. Discussions also centred on the growing pressures of the current model and highlighted the need for improvements – relating to volunteer incentives and training.

Considerations:

- With population growth and increased workload on volunteers our departments need paid on call.
- Current model is unsustainable, paid on call should be considered.
- Everyone is crying for standards, and they are needed but how can they be achievable?
- Level 1 training should be standardized everywhere.
- Consider incentives that are non-taxable, or tax breaks for volunteers.
- Incentives that work in rural areas as well as urban.
- The higher the expectations the harder it is to recruit and retain volunteers.
- Jr. Firefighters program should be considered for all departments, find a way to help get fire fighters into schools e.g. job shadow programs, etc. to help with recruitment.
- Concerned these changes will disconnect departments from their communities.
- We need to make sure we keep the sense of community.

TABLE 3 – PROVINCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

When participants were asked what the Province should consider in moving these recommendations forward the feedback was clear and consistent; there is an openness to modernization, participants wanted to ensure that decisions were thoughtful, realistic and completed in a collaborative manner. The below highlights the common themes identified at this table and where participants feel the province should focus their attention.

Considerations:

- There was not enough feedback from the initial survey to make decisions. The Province should consider more feedback opportunities before implementing change.
- Broader consultation needs to be undertaken by the Province.
- More emphasis should be placed on volunteer fire departments.
- Recommendations could be financially out of reach.
- Average taxpayer should not be paying for fire services for another region.
- Important to keep a sense of community, going about this work carefully or risk driving people away from the volunteer service when retention and recruitment is already a challenge.
- Development of a recruitment aid for fire departments.
- The history of the volunteer service and what has been accomplished needs to be appreciated. Fire departments are bound by traditions, and takes time to change.
- Timelines to complete the recommendations are ambitious.
- Invest into and update training, everyone should be trained the same, this could improve people's ability to move between departments with relocation.

TABLE 4 – COUNCIL'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING FIRE SERVICES

When asked what Municipal Council can do to support fire departments considering the proposed recommendations, participants were positive about the current level of support from Council. Responses highlighted the important role Council can play in advocacy, resources, and ensuring departments are supported through the implementation of any recommendations.

Considerations:

- Advocate for Kings to be a model of success. This model in the Municipality works through cooperation and support.
- Advocate for the Province to provide funding support.
- Support the fire departments to ensure the Provincial recommendations do not negatively impact the quality of Kings' fire service.
- Communicate with Provincial representatives that rural fire departments are different.
- Host more meetings to ensure continued cooperation between the Municipality and fire departments and keeping fire departments updated on changes.
- Communicate with Provincial representatives that the timelines for changes are ambitious and need to be thoughtfully carried out.

TABLE 5 – WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT THE PROVINCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

While much of the conversation focused on questions or concerns, participants also identified several positive elements within the proposed recommendations. The reponses highlight areas of opportunity and reflect a shared recongition that improvements made thoughtfully can strengthen the fire service. The below captures the positive components identified with the recommendations:

Considerations:

- Class three drivers tests will be more obtainable.
- Training standards are welcomed.
- Equal training across all departments is a good thing.
- This could improve the issue of different processes across departments and municipalities.
- New reporting will provide more data to determine trends and make informed decisions.
- Record management program is a big win that allows connectivity between departments and may ease reporting requirement for Chiefs.
- Improving access to decontamination will support departments of all sizes.
- Fire Commissioner may be a positive. Fire Services has a lot of opportunity for improvement and a Commissioner could help improve firefighter concerns.

NEXT STEPS

The Municipality of the County of Kings is committed to ensuring that the feedback shared through this engagement is not only heard but acted upon. As an immediate next step, the Municipality will share the findings of this report with the Department of Emergency Management to ensure that the needs of our local fire services are clearly communicated as discussions around fire service modernization continue. The Municipality will leverage the Fire Service Advisory Committee as an avenue for fire leadership to remain informed about the Provincial recommendations and its implementation.

This report will also be sent to all participants who requested a copy and published on the Municipality's Community Engagement webpage.

CONCLUSION

This engagement session provided an important opportunity to hear directly from our local fire services at a time of potential change to the fire service system. Participants spoke openly about the challenges they are facing, the realities of being frontline volunteers in their communities, and their viewpoints on the proposed modernization recommendations from the Province. Across all discussions there was a shared commitment to maintaining strong effective fire services, with a community focus and a message that meaningful engagement, realistic expectations, and adequate support both financially and administratively would be essential to a successful path forward.

Through our conversations it was evident that the fire service in Kings County is built on the dedication of its volunteers, a strong connection to community, and a deep sense of compassion and responsibility. The insights shared through this process reflected not only the fears and concerns members in the fire service face, but also a willingness to be part of the solution to help shape a sustainable future.

The Municipality of the County of Kings would like to thank all fire service members who took the time to attend and participate in this engagement session. Your contributions play a vital role in helping us advocate for the future of fire services in our region. Your continued commitment to serving your communities does not go unnoticed.

Across every table, the message was clear:
Fire service leaders are committed to protecting their communities—but they are asking for clear direction, meaningful support, and a seat at the table as the future of fire services takes shape.