Village of Haines Junction
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes
April 20, 2026

Present:	Absent:
Mayor Strand	None
Councillor Busche	
Councillor Mackinnon	
Councillor Moore	
Councillor Sundbo	

CAO Fairbank, Recorder L. Sylvain, Sylvain Human Resource Services (not present)

1. **Call to Order**
   The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. **Acknowledgement of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Traditional Territory**
   Mayor Strand acknowledged that we are on the traditional territory of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

3. **Adoption of Agenda**
   #97-26 It was moved and seconded
   THAT the agenda be adopted.

   Motion #97-26 was **CARRIED.**

4. **Declaration of Pecuniary Interest**
   There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

5. **Old Business**

   a. Review of Emergency Planning Documents

   CAO Presentation:

   - Reintroduced the March 11 report requesting Council approval of the draft Emergency Response Plan and Emergency Response Guidelines (ERG).
   - Emphasized the documents are first drafts and intended to evolve as a living framework.
   - Indicated updates will be made based on lessons learned from incidents and expanded collaboration with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations (CAFN).
   - Confirmed drafts were developed by Chris Reynolds and staff at Council's direction
   - Stated ongoing amendments to the ERG and Municipal Emergency Plan (MEP) will continue.
   - Committed to providing orientation and role-specific emergency response training for staff and elected officials.

- Highlighted continued work with CAFN toward a joint emergency management document outlining coordinated response between governments.

i. RTC – Emergency Response Planning Update

Discussion:

- Council raised concerns that the Municipal Emergency Plan does not read as a clear, actionable plan, as plans should include defined objectives, outcomes, resources, and responsibilities, based on technical writing standards. While these elements are referenced, they are not clearly or explicitly outlined. Council emphasized the need for greater clarity and precision given the document's intended use during emergencies.
- Council acknowledged the complexity of emergency planning and the need to address both small local incidents and large-scale events requiring external support.
- Council emphasized the importance of scalability, clear roles, and a defined leadership hierarchy for effective response. Concern was raised about unclear or duplicated authority, and inconsistencies with the existing Emergency Measures Bylaw.
- Council noted gaps in coordination with external agencies and misalignment with the Incident Command System (ICS), including issues with the organizational structure.
- Council recommended using position titles instead of names and improving clarity to reduce confusion during emergencies. Council recognized limited local experience in emergency management and the need for training and practical exercises.
- Council noted that while command structure issues may be less critical in small events, they become significant in larger, multi-agency incidents.
- Council highlighted the use of a unified command structure under the ICS to manage multiple jurisdictions.
- Council explained that unified command involves each agency designating an incident commander who collectively operates as a coordinated leadership team.
- CAO explained that the current structure assumes a single decision-maker at the top, supported by input from a liaison officer to inform decisions within a hierarchical command model.
    - Council outlined that a unified command approach under ICS allows multiple incident commanders from different agencies to jointly set objectives and agree on coordinated action plans.
    - Council noted that unified command enables shared decision-making, particularly in complex, multi-agency emergencies (e.g., utilities and municipal response working together).
- CAO stated the intent of the plan is to provide clear, actionable guidance for staff and Council during emergencies.
- Council identified overlap and lack of clarity between roles such as Emergency Measures Committee, Emergency Operations Director, and CAO. It also noted concerns with assigning multiple responsibilities to key personnel (e.g., Fire Chief/Emergency Coordinator), which may create operational gaps during

emergencies. Drawing staff from operational roles into command positions could leave critical response functions understaffed and is not workable.

ii. *Draft VoHJ Municipal Emergency Plan 2026*
iii. *Draft VoHJ Emergency Response Guidelines 2026*

Discussion with Chris Reynolds, Deputy Fire Marshal with Yukon Government:

- Council shared previously mentioned concerns and comments regarding the plan reading more as guiding principles than a clear, actionable document and lacks clarity for emergency use. Council explained that it identified gaps in how agencies would coordinate, including absence of a unified command structure under ICS. Finally, it emphasized limited local capacity and training, reinforcing the need for a clearer, more structured approach aligned with ICS principles.
- Chris Reynolds explained that the plan was developed with awareness of limited staffing and existing gaps, and consideration of a future Protective Services Manager role. He noted that the structure aligns with ICS principles for internal village operations, with external agencies (including EMO) supporting larger incidents as needed. Finally, he emphasized the need for clearly defined internal roles and significant training to support effective implementation and coordination with external partners.
- Council noted that relying on individual names in the org chart is not sustainable due to staff turnover and recent personnel changes. It recommended using position titles instead of names for continuity and emphasized that all roles within the emergency structure will require training.
- Chris Reynolds explained that the Municipal Emergency Plan (MEP) and guideline are intended to align with ICS structure but are living documents, not finalized products. He noted the guideline was designed to support the Village through 2026, with ongoing updates expected over time. A future Protective Services Manager would be responsible for maintaining and regularly updating these documents.
- Chris Reynolds emphasized that after-action reviews from incidents (e.g., power outages or extreme weather events) should be used to improve and update specific sections of the plan. The guideline should be reviewed at least every 6–12 months and updated continuously following emergency events to incorporate lessons learned and improve future response outcomes.
- Council noted lack of clarity regarding leadership and decision-making authority within the organizational structure. It identified inconsistencies in the plan, including references to the Emergency Measures Committee, CAO leadership responsibilities, and an Emergency Coordinator role. There is potential overlap or ambiguity between designated roles and responsibilities during emergency response. Council emphasized the need for a clear, unambiguous chain of command to avoid confusion during an actual emergency activation.
- Chris Reynolds acknowledged that using individual names in the guideline may not be ideal and agreed that position titles may be better to account for staffing changes. He explained that, under ICS principles, elected officials are generally not part of the active incident command structure. Instead, Council may serve in a liaison capacity through the

CAO during emergency response, while operational command remains separate from elected members.

- Council emphasized that elected officials should remain non-operational and primarily serve in an informational or liaison capacity. Potential conflict was identified for Council members involved in the Volunteer Fire Department during emergencies. Council raised concerns about dual operational and strategic roles for key personnel, noting this may not be workable during incidents.
- Chris Reynolds noted that emergency roles are case-by-case and dependent on incident needs. He explained that roles cannot be performed simultaneously, so deputy positions are included for coverage. He emphasized that flexibility is required due to limited staffing and potential absences, meaning plans must account for non-ideal conditions.
- Council discussed the frequency and locations of the mention of Council's role to be in the document. This discussion remains ongoing.
- Council emphasized that the plan is strategic in nature and appropriate as a starting point, but noted the need to develop more detailed, tactical response guidance. The CAO confirmed the plan was intended as a foundational document under tight timelines, with further development to expand into operational and tactical detail over time.
- What is process for creating this plan?
    - Chris Reynolds explained that the plan follows the 'CSA 1600' national standard, which shapes its structure and repetition, and noted it is intentionally high-level to start, with the expectation it will become more operational through training, exercises, and ongoing refinement.
- Are organizations expected to adopt the new CSA 1600 standard as it is a recommended guideline rather than a legal requirement?
    - The City of Whitehorse is updating its plan to match this standard. Most organizations and governments are choosing to follow it, though it is not a requirement.
- Can we find out if Yukon Government and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations are following the same kind of document formats and guidelines?
    - Chris Reynolds has previously worked with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and is in ongoing discussions with them currently. He confirmed that its plan will adopt current CSA standards as well.
- Council suggested reviewing emergency plans from other communities, especially those with wildfire experience, to inform local planning, and raised concerns about unclear roles and responsibilities in existing bylaws (e.g., Emergency Measures Commission, CAO authority), noting the need for clarity, training, and consideration of financial and resource requirements (e.g., EOC setup, equipment, reserves).
- How outdated are the Village of Haines Junction's existing emergency measures and emergency planning bylaws?
    - They are from 2020. They aren't necessarily out of date but could warrant a review to assess.
- The CAO recalled earlier discussions with Chris Reynolds about developing a higher-level emergency response program to support the plan, including training, updates, and

staffing, and noted this broader framework for ongoing maintenance and improvement has not yet been addressed. Is this still intended as part of the approach?

  - Chris Reynolds confirmed that the 364-20 and 365-20 bylaws and overall emergency management framework were identified during discussions as needing review and updating, including considerations around funding and Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) readiness (equipment, maintenance, and infrastructure needs). He noted that while a full formal gap analysis was not completed, conversations consistently highlighted existing gaps and the need for ongoing program management. He emphasized that emergency management is not a one-time document but an evolving program requiring continuous maintenance, including regular training (e.g., tabletop exercises), defined schedules for updates and reviews, and decisions on resourcing based on financial capacity. Chris Reynolds stated that a dedicated, experienced staff role would be essential to manage and sustain the program over time, as the current plan is only a foundational step intended to be expanded and strengthened through ongoing implementation and practice.

- Chris Reynolds emphasized that training and emergency management responsibilities should be embedded into staff roles and job descriptions (e.g., logistics, liaison functions) to ensure continuity despite staff turnover. He noted that municipalities are increasingly treating emergency management as an ongoing core function with structured training (e.g., ICS), regular tabletop exercises, and dedicated coordination roles, recommending that the future staff position take on a central role in maintaining and delivering this ongoing program.
- Council noted concerns that the community may assume significant external support during emergencies and emphasized that EMO has limited staffing and territory-wide responsibilities, meaning local response capacity may need to be the primary focus even during major events such as wildfires. What should the Village expect in terms of coordination and other support from EMO?
  - Chris Reynolds responded that while Yukon EMO plays an important coordination role, it is limited by staffing and competing territory-wide priorities, meaning local communities cannot assume full reliance on them during major events. He emphasized that actual response often involves multiple partners (e.g., other government departments, contractors, military, Red Cross, neighbouring communities), and that resource availability is not guaranteed even within government systems due to internal prioritization and capacity constraints. Chris Reynolds recommended that the community clarify EMO support expectations through scenario-based questions and tabletop exercises, and plan for a more networked response model relying on mutual aid and neighbouring communities rather than EMO alone.
- Council raised the challenge of how Yukon EMO should be reflected in the emergency plan, suggesting the need to clarify EMO's role directly with them first before incorporating them within the document. How does Council write EMO into its plan?
  - Chris Reynolds recommended discussing EMO's role directly with them but noted that their involvement should be scalable depending on the size of the

event, ranging from minimal notification and coordination for small incidents to more structured support during major events, with expectations and triggers for EMO involvement best clarified through training and tabletop exercises.

- CAO noted that Yukon EMO often acts as a gatekeeper to resources, making the relationship critical, while also emphasizing that EMO support is not unlimited or guaranteed, which reinforces the importance of strong coordination and external relationship-building (including recent engagement with EMO and CAFN).
- Council added that additional resources may also be accessed through neighbouring governments and communities (e.g., CAFN and the Rangers) and highlighted the value of collective response and resource-sharing among communities, suggesting this could be a topic for broader regional discussion (e.g., Association of Yukon Communities (AYC).
- Chris Reynolds explained that while EMO is the formal gatekeeper for requesting resources such as Rangers, small communities will often default to informal, direct coordination for speed and practicality, but cautioned that bypassing formal channels can create risks around coordination breakdowns, accountability, liability (e.g., WCB coverage for participants), and significant financial exposure if costs are not properly authorized and tracked. Chris emphasized that official EMO channels are important for ensuring proper authorization, cost coverage (including potential federal billing pathways), and post-event financial accountability. He stressed the importance of training and documentation systems to manage resource requests and financial tracking during and after emergency events.
- Council noted that there are a few minor typos and formatting issues in the document and indicated that the CAO will follow up with Chris Reynolds directly to coordinate corrections.
    - Chris Reynolds recognized that minor document updates are needed (including replacing named individuals with position titles due to staffing changes). He invited Council to provide all suggested edits through the CAO for incorporation into a revised version. Chris indicated he will review concerns about repetition in the document and determine whether adjustments are needed or if structure was intentional, and reaffirmed that ongoing EMO coordination, tabletop exercises, and the addition of a dedicated future staff position will be key to strengthening day-to-day emergency program management, which is currently being handled alongside other duties.
- Council suggested reviewing and tightening existing bylaws to help address and reduce potential gaps or issues identified in the emergency plan.
- Chris Reynolds noted broader system gaps including funding considerations, bylaw updates, and the need for clear timelines and documentation processes during emergencies, emphasizing that larger events require structured incident management (e.g., ICS/EOC support, external assistance when capacity is exceeded) and strong record-keeping for decision-making, cost tracking, and legal accountability, which would be developed through future training and implementation.

Discussion:

- CAO outlined two options for Council's consideration: either approve the current emergency plan as Version 1.0 with the understanding that a revised Version 1.1 would follow shortly incorporating EMO input, Council feedback, and staff notes within the next couple of months, or, option two: delay approval until a later date (potentially June 2026) to allow more revisions to be incorporated before formal adoption, noting the trade-off between having an approved plan in place sooner versus waiting for a more refined version.
    - Council noted potentially a third option: to approve the plan as a document in progress.
- Council noted that in major emergencies the initial response is typically intense and immediate (first 24–48 hours) before formal EMO coordination and external resources fully engage, suggesting that urgent local action may be required in the early stages while still informing EMO when requesting additional resources such as the Rangers. Past EMO-led responses were referenced, such as the Marsh Lake flooding, to illustrate that EMO typically takes responsibility for coordination and funding at a high level, while relying on various external parties and equipment providers to carry out operational work, emphasizing that EMO's role is broader strategic coordination rather than direct on-the-ground management.
- Council debated and discussed potential next steps, including the pros and cons of each option put forward by the CAO.
    - The CAO noted that approving the current plan as an official Council-adopted version, with the understanding that it will be actively and significantly updated in the near term, is beneficial so staff have a current, Council-approved reference document to rely on during emergencies, rather than relying on outdated previous plans, even while recognizing the need for ongoing improvements.
- Council suggested delaying approval to a later Council meeting and holding another review session to allow more time for consideration and potential additions or revisions to the plan before making a decision.
    - **Action:** The CAO confirmed the plan could be brought back at the following Council meeting with tracked changes/markups clearly identified, allowing Council to review and proceed from a revised version once available.

b. Council Prioritization Planning

i. Strategic Priority Matrix

CAO Presentation:

- Presented the strategic planning matrix prepared by Christina Benty, noting progress in reducing outstanding action items from approximately 100 to around 80, while acknowledging that most completed items reflect lower-complexity tasks.
- Highlighted that roughly 340 items have been completed since January 2025 (excluding procedural motions) and explained that the initiative was introduced due to concerns

about staff capacity and the impact of frequent emergent, time-sensitive agenda items on Council's ability to focus on strategic priorities.

- Outlined that the matrix categorizes items by type (Council motion, request, staff initiative, legislative requirement, or strategic priority) and was intended for Council review using a red/yellow/green prioritization system ahead of the meeting.

Discussion:

- Council noted that an outstanding item not captured in the current materials was the EV charging station project, recalling it as a previously discussed initiative that should be reflected in the record.
    - CAO provided an update on the EV charging station project, explaining that a contractor was engaged and initial planning work completed, but the project encountered issues including supplier stock shortages, cost escalation of alternatives, and electrical capacity limitations; as a result, the scope could not be delivered as originally approved, the funding was returned to the funder, and no Council-approved municipal funds were expended beyond limited preliminary assessment work.

ii. RTC - Council Prioritization Tool

iii. Council Prioritization Tool

CAO Presentation:

- Explained that the original version of the matrix used multiple (approximately seven) staff prioritization tiers which proved overly complex, and was revised into a simplified colour-coded system where red represents high priority, yellow medium priority, green lower priority, and blue indicates items on hold due to operational constraints, intended to improve clarity and support more consistent prioritization of work items. CAO noted that the most recent version of this document says 'updated April 2026' and has 80 items.

Discussion:

- Council discussed making time for a two-hour meeting to discuss council prioritization tools.
    - **Action:** CAO to send an email to Council with instructions on ways to review and interpret the Council Prioritization Tool.

6. New Business

There was no new business.

7. Motion to Close Meeting to the Public

a. Meeting with EMO Staff

#98-26 It was moved and seconded

THAT the meeting be closed to the public at 1:01 p.m.

Motion #98-26 was **CARRIED**.

8. **Motion to Reopen Meeting to the Public**

#99-26 It was moved and seconded
THAT the meeting be reopened to the public at 3:30 p.m.

Motion #99-26 was **CARRIED**.

9. **Adjournment**

#100-26 It was moved and seconded
THAT the meeting be adjourned.

Motion #100-26 was **CARRIED**

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Mayor Diane Strand

CAO David Fairbank