



**Municipal Services Standing Committee Meeting
February 11, 2024**

AGENDA

A. CALL TO ORDER AND CONFIRMATION OF QUORUM

B. REVIEW

- a. Agenda
- b. Minutes
- c. Visions and Values
- d. Declaration of Financial Interest

C. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- a. Municipal Services Director's Report

D. ADMINISTRATION

- a. Briefing Note - Overview of proposed Metis and Town of Fort Smith land trade agreement.

E. OTHER BUSINESS

F. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

G. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

H. ADJOURNMENT



MINUTES

The Municipal Services Standing Committee Meeting was held on Tuesday, January 14th, 2025 @ 6:30 pm within the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Present: Mayor Fergusson, Cr. Heaton, Cr. Cox, Cr. Couvrette, Cr. Karasiuk, D/M Keizer and Cr. Tuckey
Regrets: Cr. Benwell and Cr. Bathe
Staff Present: Tracy Thomas, Senior Administrative Officer
Raveena Brown, Executive Secretary
Andrew Grenier, Director of Municipal Services
Emily Colucci, Director of Community Services

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Fergusson called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and handed the Chair to Cr. Karasiuk.

B. REVIEW

a. Agenda

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson
Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That the agenda be adopted as amended to add a briefing note regarding pool closures and an in-camera session under Other Business.

PASSED

b. Minutes

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson
Seconded by: Cr. Cox

The minutes from the Municipal Services Standing Committee Meeting on December 10th, 2024, be adopted as presented.

PASSED

c. Vision and Values

d. Declaration of Financial Interest

C. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. The Municipal Services Report for December

Cr. Couvrette highlighted the significant outage associated with the brownouts, expressing concern about whether the town sustained any equipment damage as a result. He stressed the importance of tracking related costs to address these issues in future discussions, including interventions concerning rate increases.

Cr. Heaton expressed her gratitude for all of the snow clearing that has been happening around town.

D/M Keizer noted that he appreciated the pictures added to the report and asked when the tour of the town's facilities would take place. Director Grenier noted that a date will be set when all Council Members are in Town.

D. ADMINISTRATION

a. Award of Contract for the Procurement of Chain Link Fence Materials for Two Cemeteries January 2025



Moved by: Cr. Couvrette

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Council approve the award of the contract to AAG Landscaping for the supply of chain link fence materials in the amount of \$29,387.37.

IN FAVOR: Cr. Heaton, Cr. Karasiuk, D/M Keizer, Mayor Fergusson, Cr. Cox, and Cr. Couvrette

ABSTAIN: Cr. Tuckey

PASSED

Director Grenier was excused during this conversation at 6:38 pm and returned at 6:42 pm.

Mayor Fergusson inquired about the motion to purchase building materials and questioned how long the materials would remain unused, whether appropriate storage space was available, and what the next steps would be regarding their utilization.

Cr. Couvrette reflected on previous council discussions regarding the potential for community leadership to take a proactive role in improving and maintaining a local asset. He suggested that leadership groups could consider hiring skilled individuals to install it, create training opportunities, and involve others in the asset's development. Couvrette emphasized the importance of community involvement in its upkeep, proposing initiatives such as regular clean-ups and fostering respect for the asset and those who use it. He viewed this as an opportunity to rebuild community spirit, which has waned in recent years due to factors like COVID-19, and encouraged the town to collaborate with citizens and organizations to ensure the asset is well-maintained and valued.

E. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Briefing Note – Pool Shutdown

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

Recommendation:

That Council receive this briefing note as information

PASSED

Director Grenier explained that the air handling unit is experiencing ongoing issues due to inconsistent power, which is damaging variable-speed components. Without functioning variable-speed controls, the oversized air handler operates at full capacity or not at all. This leads to complications: running it at full capacity risks freezing, while turning it off at night to prevent freezing causes temperature and humidity imbalances that result in further damage. There have been multiple repairs affected, however, parts inventory is now depleted and a critical replacement part has been ordered, but it is not expected to arrive until at least the first quarter of the year.

The decision was to align the repair with a planned spring shutdown for annual maintenance, as well as address the recommendations outlined in the engineer's pool assessment report. He emphasized that continuing to operate the unit in its current state would lead to further deterioration and increased costs, noting that the planned maintenance and repair work has been accounted for in the budget.

Mayor Fergusson sought clarification on whether this shutdown of our pool was a direct result of the NTPC brownouts in our community, and whether they were what caused the failure of our system.



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Director Grenier confirmed that this was indeed a direct result of the power fluctuations and shutdowns.

Cr. Cox inquired whether measures such as surge protection units or other safeguards have been considered to prevent future damage to replacement parts, ensuring the new components are protected from similar failures.

Director Grenier explained that it would be best to install it for the building itself where the power enters the building, however, he is still gathering cost estimates for the installation, noting that the three-phase power requirement makes the project potentially expensive and emphasizing the need for a clear understanding of the associated costs.

Cr. Heaton noted that this situation is not due to procedural, operational, or power usage issues on the town's side but stems from the inadequate service provided by the monopoly supplier. She acknowledged the efforts of Director Grenier and his team over the past years in working to restore consistent operations and expressed appreciation for their dedication.

Cr. Couvrette recommended that the administration and Mayor draft a strong letter addressed to both the NWT Power Corporation Minister and the Public Utilities Board. The letter should highlight concerns regarding the Power Corporation's lack of long-term vision, inadequate planning for system maintenance, and the deteriorating state of the community's power distribution system and generators. He criticized the corporation's management practices, emphasizing that these issues undermine confidence in their ability to effectively operate.

Couvrette also pointed out that the corporation is seeking a rate increase, which he deemed unacceptable given their performance. He proposed bringing a resolution to the NWT Association of Communities (NWTAC) to urge the government to consider a new governance model for power supply in the NWT. He suggested transitioning the Power Corporation from a Crown corporation to a government department, arguing that this could improve efficiency and accountability while reducing costs associated with high executive salaries.

Cr. Couvrette emphasized the potential cost savings and the increased accountability that could result from restructuring the organization. He expressed his intention to bring a resolution before the town for consideration at the upcoming NWTAC meeting. Couvrette also suggested that the Mayor, if she wishes, could bring forward a motion on the matter, and he offered to draft it.

He stressed the importance of writing to both the Power Corporation and the Public Utilities Board to highlight that the situation is affecting a major community asset. With the facility potentially down for three to four months, there will be a loss of revenue and a negative impact on residents' health and social well-being. Couvrette concluded by stating that the Power Corporation must be fully accountable for the situation, as it is their direct responsibility.

Cr. Heaton inquired about how the issue would be communicated to the community, questioning whether there would be a staged approach to the messaging. She also raised the concern that residents may seek compensation or coverage for not having access to the facility, as it is considered an important part of their activities.

Director Colucci explained that in situations where services are no longer available, the usual approach is to offer members a refund on a pro-rated basis, depending on how much of their membership they have used. Alternatively, members are given the option to freeze their memberships until the facility reopens. She emphasized that the goal is to provide people with options to address the situation.



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b. In-Camera Session

Moved by: Cr. Couvrette
Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson

Recommendation:

That Council move in-camera in accordance with the Cities, Towns, and Villages Act, Section 23(3)(e) a matter still under consideration and on which Council has not yet publicly announced a decision if discussion in public would likely prejudice the municipal corporation's ability to carry out its activities or negotiations.

Went in-camera at 6:54 pm.

PASSED

Moved by: Cr. Couvrette
Seconded by: Cr. Cox

Recommendation:

That Mayor and Council move out of an in-camera session.

Came out of an in-camera at 7:14 pm.

PASSED

F. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson
Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That Cr. Benwell and Cr. Bathe be excused from the Municipal Services Standing Committee meeting on January 14th, 2025.

PASSED

G. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Municipal Services Standing Committee Meeting will be on February 4th, 2025.

H. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson
Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That the meeting be adjourned at 7:15 pm.

PASSED

Vision

The vision statement outlines what our community wants to be. Our vision statement provides a basis for future decision-making and activities.

The Town of Fort Smith will work with our partners to enhance our excellent quality of life by respecting values, traditions, and healthy lifestyles. We will continue to advance as a unified, active and prosperous community.

Values

The mission defines how the Town will operate; it represents what is fundamentally important to us in how we work with each other and represent the citizens of Fort Smith.

- **Welcoming** – we are a friendly community which embraces our visitors, students and residents alike.
- **Innovative** – we take on new challenges in the pursuit of excellence.
- **Sustainable** – we are committed to sustainability in our Town’s operations and development.
- **Unified** – we work with Indigenous governments and our partners to implement our plans and achieve our goals.
- **Committed** – we operate professionally and to the highest ethical standards.



Directors Report

Department: Municipal Services
Subject: Municipal Services Monthly Report

Date: February 11, 2025

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Council of the Town of Fort Smith accepts the Municipal Services Monthly Report for February 11, 2025, as presented.

CAPITAL PLAN PROJECTS:

Main lift station rebuild is continuing with no issues to report.

PUBLIC WORKS:

Snow removal activities are ongoing in the town core. As we complete this work, crews will begin moving into residential neighborhoods.

Our garbage truck continues to present challenges due to ongoing mechanical issues, compounded by fluctuating weather conditions ranging from extreme highs to extreme lows. Despite constant repairs, collection services are being maintained.

Regular duties and responsibilities are being carried out as usual.





Directors Report

WATER PLANT:

Power issues have caused some problems with the pond pumphouse operations, we are currently getting this assessed and repaired.

We have been doing our yearly chemical bottle maintenance that consists of cleaning and sending our chemical bottles back for refund.

We had an issue with foreign debris getting into one of the pumps at the main lift station and causing issues, we have identified and done the necessary repairs to be back in regular operation.

Regular duties and Responsibilities.



FACILITY MAINTENANCE:

We have been prioritizing the snowboard shack to have it ready for the user group for their upcoming event.

We have begun the work requested by the animal shelter.

The pool has been getting much needed repair and maintenance as we have this shut down.

The arena has been running great, we had 1 issue with the ice however were quick to have it repaired and ready for the users the following day.

We experianced a major brown out the other day that shut both ice plants down but were able to get them working correctly again with some remote help from Cimco.



Directors Report

Regular duties and Responsibilities.





Briefing Note

To: Mayor and Council
Date: February 11, 2025
Subject: Overview of proposed Metis and Town of Fort Smith land trade agreement.

PURPOSE:

To provide information to Council on the proposed trade of Town-owned lands for Metis withdrawn lands to facilitate future growth of Town water treatment and storage infrastructure.

BACKGROUND:

It was previously identified that the Town of Fort Smith will require expanded water treatment and storage capacity as large development projects are brought onto the municipal water and sewer infrastructure. As part of responsible urban planning, consideration needs to be given to the space available within municipal boundaries for infrastructure growth.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The Town of Fort Smith water treatment plant is located on land owned by the Town. A significant portion of that property remains undeveloped as unstable low-lying land. The adjacent properties, where water storage capacity could be located are currently withdrawn as part of the Metis land claims negotiation.

RATIONALE:

Ongoing land development, withdrawal agreements, and transfers may limit available space for critical infrastructure. To ensure long-term municipal capacity, securing key properties for infrastructure expansion is essential.

The Fort Smith Métis Council has proposed a land trade involving:

- A portion of land west of the Fort Smith Arena and two parcels on Whitford Road (Town-owned).
- Fourteen subdivided lots and a roadway allowance east of the water treatment plant (Métis-withdrawn lands).



Briefing Note

CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Land Assessment:** Per the Land Administration Bylaw, any acquired land must be assessed for potential liabilities.
- **Valuations:**
 - **Town-owned lands requested by the Métis Council:**
 - Assessed value of 14 lots: **\$124,700.00**
 - Invested value of two Whitford Road lots: **\$106,779.00**
 - Surveying and consolidation costs for the arena-adjacent land: **\$15,000.00**
 - **Total: \$195,179.00**
 - **Métis-withdrawn lands offered for trade:**
 - Assessed value: **\$124,700.00**
- **Market Appraisals:** The values listed are based on tax assessments and development costs rather than real market appraisals.

NEXT STEPS – OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL DIRECTION

To move forward with the proposed land trade, Mayor and Council may consider providing one of the following directions. Each option includes staff time and financial cost implications.

1. Proceed with the Land Trade (With Conditions)

Direction: Authorize Administration to proceed with the land trade, subject to specific conditions.

Resource Requirements:

- **Staff Time:** Moderate – coordination with legal counsel, appraisers, and Métis Council; preparation of trade agreements.
- **Financial Costs:** High – third-party appraisal, legal fees, land survey costs (~\$25,000), potential GNWT fees.

Conditions to be met:

- Conduct a third-party appraisal to confirm fair market values.
- Obtain legal review to ensure compliance with municipal and territorial regulations.
- Confirm that the Fort Smith Métis Council has formally notified GNWT to remove the land withdrawal.
- Develop a formal trade agreement with clearly defined responsibilities and timelines.



Briefing Note

2. Conduct Further Due Diligence

Direction: Require additional assessments before making a decision.

Resource Requirements:

- **Staff Time:** High – research, coordination with external consultants, preparation of reports.
- **Financial Costs:** High – environmental and geotechnical assessments (\$20,000+), public consultation costs (~\$5,000).

Assessments to be conducted:

- Environmental and geotechnical assessments to determine land suitability.
- Financial impact analysis to evaluate long-term costs and benefits.
- Public consultation to gauge community support and concerns.

3. Modify the Trade Proposal

Direction: Direct Administration to renegotiate the terms of the trade with the Fort Smith Métis Council.

Resource Requirements:

- **Staff Time:** Moderate – negotiations, consultation with legal and financial advisors.
- **Financial Costs:** Medium – potential legal fees, updated land assessments, survey modifications (~\$25,000).

Key considerations for renegotiation:

- Adjusting land parcels to ensure a more equitable trade based on appraised values.
- Seeking additional compensation (financial or in-kind) to balance value discrepancies.
- Exploring a long-term lease arrangement instead of an outright trade.

4. Defer the Decision

Direction: Postpone any decision until critical information becomes available.

Resource Requirements:

- **Staff Time:** Low – monitoring GNWT decisions, awaiting further strategic planning.
- **Financial Costs:** Low – no immediate costs, but potential delays in future infrastructure planning.



Briefing Note

Reasons for deferral:

- Await GNWT's formal confirmation on the land withdrawal status.
- Develop a municipal land-use strategy to guide infrastructure planning.
- Gather additional data on long-term infrastructure needs and alternatives.

5. Reject the Trade

Direction: Decide not to proceed with the land trade and explore alternative solutions.

Resource Requirements:

- **Staff Time:** Low – some work required to assess alternative options.
- **Financial Costs:** Low – no direct expenses, but potential costs associated with securing other lands for infrastructure expansion.

Considerations:

- The trade does not offer a clear net benefit to the Town.
- Alternative land options may be more suitable for future water infrastructure.
- Relationship Impact: Rejecting the trade may impact the Town's relationship with the Fort Smith Métis Council. Careful discussions will be required to clearly communicate the rationale for this decision and explore potential collaborative solutions. Ensuring open dialogue and mutual understanding will be essential to maintaining a positive working relationship.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Mayor and Council review the proposed trade of Town owned lands in the Westgrove subdivision and adjacent to the Arena with the Fort Smith Metis Council for the properties adjacent to the Town of Fort Smith Water Treatment plant to allow for future municipal drinking water infrastructure expansion.

Further, that Mayor and Council provide administration direction how to proceed.