



Community Services Standing Committee Meeting

MINUTES

The Community Services Standing Committee Meeting was held on Tuesday, March 11th, 2025 @ 6:30 pm within the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Present: Cr. Benwell, Cr. Heaton, Cr. Karasiuk, Cr. Bathe, D/M Keizer, Mayor Fergusson, Cr. Tuckey, Cr. Cox, and Cr. Couvrette

Regrets:

Staff Present: Tracy Thomas, Senior Administrative Officer
Raveena Brown, Executive Secretary
Emily Colucci, Director of Community Services

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Fergusson called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm and read the acknowledgment of First Nations.

B. REVIEW

a. Agenda

Moved by: Cr. Tuckey

Seconded by: D/M Keizer

That the agenda be adopted as amended to add a briefing note - Community Plan – Second Reading and Submission to Minister under D. Administration.

PASSED

b. Minutes

Moved by: Cr. Bathe

Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That the minutes from the Community Services Standing Committee Meeting on February 11th, 2025, be adopted as presented.

PASSED

c. Vision and Values

d. Declaration of Financial Interest

C. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. The Community Services Report for January

Mayor Fergusson expressed enthusiasm about the town receiving a \$12,000 award for youth programming, describing it as a significant achievement. She also shared her anticipation for Melanie Jewell's upcoming work on the new mural at the library, praising her artistic talent and noting that it will be a valuable addition to the CRC.

Mayor Fergusson acknowledged that rising costs are becoming a factor, making financial planning more challenging moving forward. She commended the report, highlighting the wealth of related information it provided, and extended her appreciation to staff for their efforts.

Director Colucci confirmed that Melanie Jewell will begin work on the library mural tomorrow, starting with the initial sketches. She noted that a community announcement will be made to celebrate this exciting project while also ensuring that Jewell has the



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necessary space to work over the coming weeks. Director Colucci added that the goal is to hold an unveiling event once the mural is completed and thanked everyone for their support.

Deputy Mayor Keizer shared that a family member is involved in the books and cooks program. He encouraged community members who have not yet signed up to reach out to the library, noting that the program has received positive feedback.

Additionally, Deputy Mayor Keizer spoke about the library's support in facilitating a digital grandparenting initiative with Finland. He commended the librarians for their efforts in sourcing the necessary books and expressed appreciation for their ongoing support. He noted that while these initiatives may not appear in the Director's report, they are valuable contributions from the library that he has observed over the past month.

Director Colucci expressed appreciation for the positive feedback on the library's services. She added that, since it occurred after the Director's report, she wanted to inform the Mayor and Council of a current vacancy. A position for the Program Coordinator for the Aquatics Program within the Community Services Department has been posted. The job posting was released that morning and will also be shared across Canada to attract applicants.

D. ADMINISTRATION

a. Briefing Note – Donation Policy

Cr. Couvrette emphasized the need for greater accountability from groups receiving funding, noting that the money comes from taxpayers and should be transparently managed. He suggested that organizations should report to Council at least every other year, beyond simply providing financial statements, to demonstrate how their programs benefit the broader community.

He also raised concerns about accessibility, pointing out that while membership fees for some organizations may be affordable for affluent residents, they can be a significant barrier for disadvantaged individuals. He questioned what steps these groups are taking to promote inclusivity and ensure their programs are accessible to all. Cr. Couvrette reiterated that as guardians of taxpayer money, Council must ensure funds are being spent appropriately, particularly given the substantial amounts allocated to these organizations.

Deputy Mayor Keizer referenced a clause in the briefing note stating that community groups must be based within the geographic boundaries of the Town of Fort Smith to receive support. He questioned whether this requirement is too restrictive, given that events such as the ski loppet, golf club, fishing derby, and Paddlefest take place outside town limits but still involve Fort Smith residents.

He noted that while the clause does not specify that activities must be held within town limits, it does require organizations to be based there. He pointed out that some clubs, like the golf club, are based in Alberta but still serve Fort Smith residents. Given the town's location on a jurisdictional border, he suggested that the wording should be revised to allow reasonable support for such events without overextending beyond Fort Smith.

SAO Thomas acknowledged that this concern will be addressed in the upcoming bylaw and policy review, with a commitment to making it a priority for revision.



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Cr. Cox expressed enthusiasm about the briefing note, stating that it addresses many of the concerns raised by the previous Council. He noted that it provides much-needed clarity, though some minor wording adjustments and clarifications may still be necessary, as Deputy Mayor Keizer mentioned.

Cr. Cox inquired about the \$4,200 in remaining funds available for allocation. He asked whether it would be possible to obtain a breakdown of how this amount was distributed over the past few years. This information, he explained, would help Council determine how best to prioritize the funds for the current year.

Moved by: Cr. Couvrette

Seconded by: Cr. Bathe

Council Directs Administration to provide a breakdown of how the Ad hoc Donation Budget has been utilized in the previous two fiscal years

PASSED

- b. Briefing Note – Request for Support – Sweetgrass Healing Centre Inc. South Slave Community Engagement Tour

Moved by: Cr. Heaton

Seconded by: Cr. Bathe

That Council **acknowledge SHC Inc.'s presence** in Fort Smith and consider providing **in-kind support** for the community engagement session scheduled for **March 17-19, 2025.**

DEFEATED

D/M Keizer provided notes on the proposal, stating that it is an interesting initiative. However, he inquired whether the TLC had been approached, as there appears to be a leadership aspect involved. Given that the program is intended for the entire community, they questioned whether the Town would be the sole supporter or if there were other partners involved.

Additionally, D/M Keizer expressed concern about the quality of the programs being offered, as he is not familiar with the individual behind the proposal. He asked whether there is a way to assess the program's credibility, emphasizing the need to ensure the Town is not endorsing something without sufficient knowledge. While acknowledging that the program may be beneficial, he noted the difficulty of making a judgment without more information and raised concerns about committing financial support without a clear understanding of its value.

Cr. Tuckey expressed uncertainty about the request, aside from serving as a point of contact. He noted that if the only action required is responding to the email to acknowledge and welcome Sweet Grass into the community for the community engagement presentation, then that seems straightforward.

Mayor Fergusson explained that the request involves in-kind support from the Town, specifically providing a space for the session. She stated that the Town would be the primary supporter by offering a venue and refreshments. Additionally, she noted that the individual is asking the Town to organize the event, while they would come to present and facilitate the session.

Cr. Couvrette questioned whether the initiative is a business venture or a social enterprise, emphasizing the need for clarification. He expressed concern that if it is strictly a business venture, supporting it could set a precedent for other businesses seeking municipal endorsement, which he views as the responsibility of the Chamber of Commerce rather



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than the Town. However, if it is a social enterprise, he noted that this would be one of the first such ventures brought before Council, warranting a more in-depth approach to how it is handled.

Cr. Heaton agreed with Deputy Mayor Keizer and Councillor Couvrette, expressing support for a business focused on mental health and addiction services coming to the community. However, she questioned whether the Town of Fort Smith should serve as the gateway for such an initiative. She suggested extending an invitation for the individual to appear before Council to address these concerns. Additionally, she noted that the GNWT has an entire department dedicated to health and social services, emphasizing that key questions should be answered before the Town commits to providing a venue, space, support, staff, or refreshments.

SAO Thomas stated that Administration will extend the invitation to become a delegate at a later date.

c. Briefing Note – Fort Smith Ice Fishing Derby 2025 Donation Request

Moved by: Cr. Bathe

Seconded by: Cr. Benwell

That Council support the Fort Smith Ice Fishing Derby through a financial contribution of \$300.00 to help sustain this valued community event and benefit the local families who participate.

PASSED

D/M Keizer noted that while the briefing note and recommendation mention a \$300 contribution, the original request did not specify this amount. Director Colucci explained that since the request did not specify an amount, she reviewed past contributions and found that the average was \$287. Based on this, Administration included the \$300 recommendation in the absence of a specific request from the group.

d. Briefing Note – Donation Request Fort Smith Minor Hockey Association

Moved by: D/M Keizer

Seconded by: Cr. Bathe

That Mayor and Council approve the donation of \$1000.00 to the Fort Smith Hockey Association towards to Tournament fees for the Alberta Native Provincials.

DEFEATED

**Mayor Fergusson excused herself during this discussion and passed the chair to Cr. Tuckey @ 6:56 pm.*

Cr. Bathe expressed support for assisting the Hockey Association but acknowledged that the funding request is significant. He noted that if the Town is reviewing how financial support is allocated, it should consider whether hockey already receives a disproportionate share of benefits in the community. Speaking as a hockey parent, he recognized that the sport already receives substantial support and suggested that, when evaluating funding requests, it may be necessary to prioritize other initiatives as well.

Cr. Karasiuk expressed difficulty in supporting sports travel for teams to attend tournaments outside the community. He pointed out that the policy specifies a benefit to the community if teams are interested in hosting a tournament locally, as it brings visitors into the town. However, he felt that supporting travel for teams to go outside the community to attend tournaments could set a problematic precedent. While he



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acknowledged the value of participating in tournaments, he did not believe it was the Town's responsibility to fund such activities.

Cr. Cox expressed agreement with Cr. Karasiuk's perspective, noting two key points. First, he highlighted that the requested amount is significant, representing nearly 25% of the remaining budget for donations. Second, he emphasized that taxpayer money should be used for Town funds and events, rather than covering fees for activities in another community. While not necessarily opposed to a smaller contribution, he felt that the proposed amount was too large to allocate outside the community.

D/M Keizer questioned whether a smaller amount might be more appropriate, given that the request is a significant one. He suggested considering a reduction in the proposed funding. Additionally, he pointed out that the event is billed as the Alberta Native Provincials and asked whether the organizers had approached the TLC or other groups that support Indigenous youth in Alberta. He inquired if this was, in fact, an Indigenous competition.

Cr. Couvrette expressed concern that the lack of clarity in the Town's policy is creating an opportunity for future challenges. He noted that this is the first request the Council has received for a donation to support travel outside the community by an organization. He pointed out that several other sports organizations engage in similar types of travel, and approving this request could set a precedent for supporting similar requests from groups like figure skating, baseball, and others. He warned that approving such requests could quickly deplete the Town's donation budget of \$4,200 by the end of April and emphasized the importance of being cautious when making these decisions, as they could lead other groups to expect the same level of support.

Cr. Karasiuk reiterated that his concern is not about the amount of money, although he acknowledged that \$1,000 is a significant request, but rather about setting a precedent for supporting travel outside the community. He expressed opposition to funding travel for specific sports events outside of the community, stating that it goes against the intent of the Town's donation policy. He clarified that even if the request were for a smaller amount, such as \$200, he would still be opposed to it.

**Cr. Tuckey passed the chair back to Mayor Fergusson at 7:06 pm.*

e. Briefing Note – Council Honorarium Bylaw 1022

Moved by: Cr. Couvrette

Seconded by: Cr. Karasiuk

That Council direct administration to postpone the implementation of the Schedule A increase until the bylaw is reviewed and, if necessary, amended prior to the end of the current Council term.

PASSED

f. Briefing Note – Award Recommendation – Bylaw and Policy Review and Development RFP

Moved by: Cr. Tuckey

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

Recommendation:

The Bylaw Review Committee recommends awarding the contract to PlanIT North based on:

- Highest overall evaluation score under the RFP criteria
- Extensive experience in bylaw and policy development



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- Fully Northern-based presence, ensuring strong regional knowledge and alignment with local governance frameworks

While the budget is slightly above other proposals, the added value and expertise provided by PlanIT North justify the selection.

Motion:

That Council approves the awarding of the Bylaw and Policy Review and Development contract to PlanIT North for \$100,019.35, as recommended by the Bylaw Review Committee.

In Favor: Cr. Benwell, Cr. Heaton, Cr. Karasiuk, D/M Keizer, Cr. Tuckey, Cr. Cox and Cr. Couvrette

Abstained: Cr. Bathe

PASSED

g. Briefing Note - Community Plan – Second Reading and Submission to Minister

Moved by: Cr. Tuckey

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

Recommendation:

That Council proceeds with the Second Reading of Bylaw 1060, cited as the Town of Fort Smith Community Plan, and directs Administration to submit the plan to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs upon approval. Meeting minutes from the public hearing on March 10, 2025, are provided with this briefing note.

Motion:

That Council gives Second Reading to Bylaw 1060, cited as the Town of Fort Smith Community Plan, and directs Administration to submit the plan to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs for final review and consultation with First Nation and Indigenous governments.

PASSED

E. OTHER BUSINESS

F. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

G. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Community Services Standing Committee Meeting will be on April 8th, 2025.

H. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by: Cr. Tuckey

Seconded by: Cr. Karasiuk

That the meeting be adjourned at 7:20 pm.

PASSED