



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
JUNE 24th, 2025 @ 7:00 PM

MINUTES

The Regular meeting of the Council 06-25 was held on
Tuesday, June 24th, 2025 @ 7 pm within the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Present: Cr. Benwell, Cr. Heaton, Cr. Karasiuk, D/M Keizer, Mayor Fergusson, Cr. Tuckey, Cr. Cox, and Cr. Couvrette
Regrets: Cr. Bathe
Staff Present: Emily Colucci, Director of Community Services (Acting SAO)
Raveena Brown, Executive Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a. Mayor Fergusson confirms quorum
- b. Mayor Fergusson reads the Acknowledgment of First Nations

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

25-140 Moved by: Cr. Couvrette
Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

PASSED

3. DELEGATIONS

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Regular Meeting of Council 05-25

25-141 Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk
Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That the minutes of the Regular Meeting 05-25 of May 20th, 2025, be adopted as presented.

PASSED

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- a. Draft Communication Plan

Director Colucci explained that the communication plan being presented was developed in 2023 but was never finalized and remains in draft form. It is being shared with Council for information purposes. While the document provides a starting point, Director Colucci noted that there have likely been developments over the past couple of years that should be reflected in an updated version.

Cr. Karasiuk asked whether the communication plan would be reviewed by the Communications Subcommittee and then brought back to the Council, or if it would be addressed by Council as a whole. Director Colucci explained that the previous approach involved a request from Council as a whole for a communication strategy. The Communications Committee then worked with staff to refine the draft before bringing it back to Council for further review. That same process would apply moving forward.

Director Colucci noted that there is currently no dedicated staff member or budget assigned to this project. The initial work on the communication strategy was undertaken when the Administrative Executive Assistant position included communications as part of



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its role, but that capacity no longer exists. Given this, Council should consider that moving forward with the strategy may require developing a project substantiation and potentially allocating capital funding in the future. It may not be something that can be fully completed in-house and could instead require a phased approach.

Cr. Cox noted that he had not yet had a chance to compare the communication plan with the recent organizational review but expressed interest in seeing how the two align. He suggested that both likely fall under the same category of ongoing work and emphasized the importance of considering both documents in the context of the upcoming budget, as they will likely go hand in hand.

Cr. Couvrette noted that the need for a formal communication strategy was raised two Councils ago, at which time he had advocated for hiring a professional to work with the Communications Committee to develop a comprehensive plan. However, the following Council decided to bring the work in-house. He suggested that, as part of the upcoming budget discussions, Council may wish to revisit the idea of engaging an external consultant to help facilitate the process.

6. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTEREST

- a. Statement of Disclosure of Interest.

7. COUNCIL BUSINESS

- a. Council Business
 - i. Protective Services Standing Committee June 3rd, 2025

PROTECTIVE	# 25-142	Moved by: Cr. Couvrette Seconded: Cr. Cox	
	That the Protective Services Standing Committee minutes from June 3 rd , 2025, be adopted as presented.		
			PASSED

PROTECTIVE	# 25-143	Moved by: Cr. Cox Seconded: Cr. Tuckey	
	That DPA-026-25, submitted by Kristielyn Jones, to operate a virtual-based counselling, wellness, consulting, and coaching services - Sweetgrass Healing Centre Inc., from Lot 359, Plan 207, 13 Poppy Cres., Fort Smith, be approved.		
			PASSED

PROTECTIVE	# 25-144	Moved by: Cr. Heaton Seconded: Cr. Cox	
	That DPA-028-25, submitted by Raphael Jeansonne-Gelinas, to operate the production of smoked meats, fish and cured meats and sausages, from Lot 306, Plan 207, 25 McDougal Rd, Fort Smith, be approved.		
			PASSED



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PROTECTIVE	# 25-145 Moved by: Cr. Benwell Seconded: Cr. Cox That DPA-030-25, submitted by Leah Mercredi, to operate gardening workshops & consulting business, from Lot 20, Plan 14, 56 Pelican St., Fort Smith, be approved. PASSED
ii. Corporate Services Standing Committee June 3rd, 2025	
CORPORATE	# 25-146 Moved by: Cr. Tuckey Seconded by: Cr. Cox That the Corporate Services Standing Committee minutes from June 3 rd , 2025, be adopted as presented. PASSED
CORPORATE	# 25-147 Moved by: Cr. Cox Seconded by: Cr. Benwell That Council authorize Administration to proceed with direct awards under established Standing Offer Agreements for goods and services related to Council-approved capital projects, where the costs fall within the approved project budget, without the need for additional Council approval where such awards exceed the SAO's individual signing authority. PASSED
CORPORATE	# 25-148 Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette That Council approve the direct award of the Riverside Park and Lookout Update Project Management and Design Services to Maskwa Engineering Ltd. under the Town's existing Standing Offer Agreement, and authorize Administration to proceed with the project in accordance with the proposed phased approach. PASSED
CORPORATE	# 25-149 Moved by: Cr. Cox Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette That Council approves the addition of the Streetscape Improvements Project to the 2025 Capital Plan, with a total budget of \$50,000, funded through the municipal capital budget. PASSED
CORPORATE	# 25-150 Moved by: Cr. Benwell Seconded by: Cr. Cox That Council approve the sale of all listed surplus items through the GNWT auction on June 7, 2025. PASSED
CORPORATE	# 25-151 Moved by: Cr. Heaton Seconded by: Cr. Benwell That Administration provide a briefing note on training needs, disposal options, and associated costs related to the trailer stage, including alternatives if the Town no longer retains it. PASSED



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CORPORATE

25-152

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk
Seconded by: D/M Keizer

That Council amend its meeting procedures on a three-month trial basis beginning August 2025, to hold two regular Council meetings per month on the first and third Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m.

PASSED

Cr. Couvrette requested clarification from Administration on whether the Council Procedures Bylaw would need to be amended before the proposed change takes effect. If an amendment is required, he suggested that Council aim to complete all three readings in a single meeting.

iii. Community Services Standing Committee June 10th, 2025

COMMUNITY

25-153

Moved by: Cr. Cox
Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That the Community Services Standing Committee minutes from June 10th, 2025, be adopted as presented.

PASSED

COMMUNITY

25-154

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk
Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Council approve the donation of \$2500 from the Music Festival budget line to the Fireweed Festival. \$1000 of it being put towards the rental of the stage, and \$1500 as a monetary donation.

PASSED

COMMUNITY

25-155

Moved by: Cr. Couvrette
Seconded by: Cr. Heaton

That Council approve a \$1500 in-kind donation to Howie Fest to be used towards the rental of the arena, contingent on the organizer providing a youth component.

PASSED

Director Colucci relayed that the organizer does not yet have a set schedule; she expects operating hours to be either 6 p.m. to 1 a.m. or 4 p.m. to 1 a.m., but this is still to be confirmed. She is not planning youth-specific events at this stage and noted that many details remain undecided. Her preference is to offer alcohol service on the rink surface, although she is uncertain how that could be implemented.

Cr. Karasiuk recalled that the previous discussion had been to approve the donation on the condition that there was a youth component included in the schedule. He expressed discomfort with approving the donation if the organizers are now uncertain about that component.

Cr. Benwell expressed concern about the idea of allowing drinking upstairs, citing the risk of individuals falling down the stairs after consuming alcohol when returning to dance or going to the bathroom.

Cr. Couvrette noted that he had raised the importance of including a youth component during the previous discussion. He suggested that the general event area could be open to all ages from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., with the time from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. reserved for adults. He expressed concern about approving a donation for an event that would be exclusive to a



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specific age group, emphasizing that it does not meaningfully promote broad community involvement.

He also stressed that this is an opportunity to demonstrate to youth that they are part of the community and are welcome to participate in honoring those the event is meant to recognize. Excluding them, in his view, sends the wrong message. Referring to one of the individuals being remembered—someone whose family includes youth in the community—he stated it is important to include them meaningfully.

Cr. Couvrette proposed an amendment to the motion, suggesting that Council approve the \$1,500 in-kind donation to Howie Fest for arena rental, contingent on organizers ensuring that youth have a dedicated opportunity to take part in the festival.

COMMUNITY	# 25-156	Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk Seconded by: Cr. Heaton	
	That Council allow liquor to be served on the ice rink surface during the adults-only portion of the festival.		
	FOR: CR. BENWELL, CR. HEATON, CR. KARASIUK, D/M KEIZER, CR. TUCKY AND CR. COX OPPOSED: CR. COUVRETTE		
	PASSED		

Cr. Tuckey suggested that, to avoid future issues with similar requests, the Town should adhere to its existing restrictions for certain areas and ensure that everyone is treated equally.

D/M Keizer noted that many individuals in the room have attended events in that facility before changes were made. At the time, having the events on the rink surface seemed logical, especially as it avoided the need to move people up and down staircases. However, he expressed uncertainty about whether the current bylaw remains appropriate. He stated that he would be comfortable revisiting and possibly revising the bylaw when the time comes, as he is not convinced the original decision was the right one based on how the facility has been used over the past 30 years.

Director Colucci explained that the space is currently used most often during the beer gardens and hockey tournaments, where people are regularly going up and down the stairs throughout the day. While the area remains accessible within the facility, it is typically surrounded by people during these events.

Cr. Benwell acknowledged the concerns and agreed that the space should remain a designated area when children are present and running around. However, in this particular case, she noted that no children would be in the space at the time alcohol is being served. Her main concern was ensuring that no accidents occur.

COMMUNITY	# 25-157	Moved by: Cr. Cox Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey	
	That the Community Services Advisory Board Meeting minutes from May 29 th , 2025, be adopted as presented.		
	PASSED		



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iv. Municipal Services Standing Committee June 10th, 2025

MUNICIPAL	# 25-158	Moved by: Cr. Tuckey Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette	That the Municipal Services Standing Committee minutes from June 10 th , 2025, be adopted as presented.	PASSED
MUNICIPAL	# 25-159	Moved by: Cr. Cr. Cox Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey	That Council approve the implementation of Initiative 3: Single Detached Home Incentive under the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF), as recommended by the HAF Committee, and direct Administration to proceed with the program rollout, including publication of the associated Program Guidelines and communications materials.	PASSED
MUNICIPAL	# 25-160	Moved by: Cr. Couvrette Seconded by: D/M Keizer	That Council approve the award of contract for consultant services related to the Town's Water Licence Renewal Application to AECOM in the amount of \$156,407 plus GST, to be funded through the Town's Community Public Infrastructure (CPI) allocation.	PASSED

b. Bylaws and Policies

c. Administration

i. Briefing Note – Second Extension of the SRFN MSA June 2025

#25-161	Moved by: Cr. Heaton Seconded by: D/M Keizer	That Council approve a second extension of the Salt River First Nation Municipal Services Agreement to January 4, 2026, or unless a new agreement is signed before then, and authorize the Mayor and SAO to execute the extension.	PASSED

ii. Briefing Note - Recommendation for awarding the Slope Monitoring Contract to WSP

#25-162	Moved by: Cr. Tuckey Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette	The Town of Fort Smith award a contract to WSP E&I Canada Limited to undertake the work required under the Slope Monitoring Project for the sum of \$175,000 and that the funding is to come from the contribution agreement with CIRNAC.	PASSED



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- iii. Briefing Note – Approval for Sidewalk Repairs and Improvement Project Management Design Services

#25-163

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That Council approve the direct award of the Sidewalk Repair and Improvement Project Management and Design Services to Maskwa Engineering Ltd. under the Town's existing Standing Offer Agreement and authorize Administration to proceed with the project in accordance with the proposed phased approach.

PASSED

d. Mayor and Council / Board Representatives

- i. Cr. Tuckey expressed his condolences to families who have lost loved ones. He extended his congratulations to the Indigenous groups and community partners for organizing a very successful and meaningful Indigenous Peoples Day celebration
- ii. Cr. Cox acknowledged the hard work of everyone involved in responding to the Tulip Lake fire. He noted that it can be easy to feel removed from the situation since the fire was across the river and hadn't directly impacted the community so far. He emphasized that Fort Smith has been fortunate, particularly with minimal smoke, but the fire was not far off and could have taken a different path. He thanked all those involved in the response and highlighted the importance of continuing FireSmart efforts, as the risk remains present.
- iii. Cr. Couvrette noted that Councillors Tuckey and Cox had already addressed three of the four points he wanted to raise and thanked them for doing so. He then highlighted recent news that the Power Corporation's rate application has been sent back for revision. He credited this outcome to the significant work and effort put in by the Town and its representatives through their intervention in the process. He emphasized that the matter is far from over, as the Power Corporation is likely to return with a revised approach. The intervention committee will continue to monitor the situation and remain actively involved.
- iv. Cr. Benwell noted that the museum's manager has stepped down and the role has since been assigned to another staff member, who is doing a great job in the position.
- v. Cr. Heaton shared her appreciation for several recent community initiatives. She highlighted the conclusion of Uncle Gabe's Friendship Centre lunch program, which successfully provided hot meals to 30 students, and noted that the program will resume in September. She also assisted with setup and takedown for the Pride Festival and commended the Fort Smith Pride Association for their excellent work. Cr. Heaton remarked on the strong turnout and positive atmosphere at the Indigenous Peoples Day celebration, describing it as extremely busy but filled with fun and a wide range of activities. She also commented on the impressive condition of the community gardens, noting that the well-maintained plots will yield a substantial amount of fresh produce for residents. She expressed gratitude for the many collaborative efforts taking place in the community.
- vi. Cr. Karasiuk shared a few brief comments, starting with a shout-out to the Thebacha Leadership Council for sponsoring the graduation banners displayed around town. He noted that education is particularly meaningful to him, given his background, and said he was impressed by the banners as soon as they went up, calling them a great idea and very well done. He asked that



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appreciation be passed along to the TLC. He also reminded the community that with summer break approaching, there will be more children out and about, and encouraged everyone to stay alert and drive safely. He wished safe travels to all those heading out over the summer.

vii. Cr. Bathe - excused

viii. D/M Keizer shared that he recently had the opportunity to attend the college graduation ceremony on behalf of the Town and present the Duncan McPherson Award. He said the experience was meaningful and well-received, and he enjoyed speaking with many of the graduates. He also mentioned meeting a young man who may be a distant relative, which led to an interesting conversation.

He went on to note that he would be traveling to Yellowknife the following day to attend the NWT Association of Communities meeting, where discussions will focus on insurance plans and upcoming initiatives. He received the meeting package just recently and plans to review it more thoroughly before the next Council meeting, where he hopes to provide further updates.

Lastly, he shared that he was recently promoted to Vice Chair of the Cities, Towns, and Villages Board while in Finland. While he's still learning what the role entails, he looks forward to gaining a better understanding in the coming days

ix. Mayor Fergusson shared that she attended the FCM conference in Ottawa with Councillor Heaton, highlighting the value of connecting with other mayors across Canada who are facing similar challenges like housing and funding gaps. She gave special recognition to EDO Daniel Wiltzen for his strong presentation on behalf of Destination Canada.

She also attended several local events, including Ron Holtorf's celebration of life, the Fort Smith Pride event, Indigenous Peoples Day (where she served as a judge), the Anglican Church logo unveiling, and the PWK High School awards ceremony.

She noted a major success for the community: Aurora College will offer an in-class General Studies program this fall, with 12 students attending in person and 10 online. More updates on college planning with TLC are expected soon. She ended by saying she's looking forward to Canada Day.

8. PROCLAMATIONS

9. ABSENCE OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

25-164

Moved by: Cr. Tuckey

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That Cr. Bathe and Mayor Fergusson be excused from the Community Services Standing Committee meeting on June 10th, 2025.

PASSED



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25-165

Moved by: Cr. Cox
Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That Cr. Bathe and Mayor Fergusson be excused from the Municipal Services Standing Committee meeting on June 10th, 2025.

PASSED

10. DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Protective Services Standing Committee	July 8 th , 2025, at 6:30 pm
Corporate Services Standing Committee	July 8 th , 2025, to follow the Protective Services Meeting with a 5-minute break
Community Services Standing Committee	July 15 th , 2025, at 6:30 pm
Municipal Services Standing Committee	July 15 th , 2025, to follow the Community Services Meeting with a 5-minute break
Regular Meeting of Council	July 22 nd , 2025, at 7 pm

11. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

25-166

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

That Cr. Bathe be excused from the Regular Meeting of Council on June 24th, 2025.

PASSED

12. ADJOURNMENT

25-167

Moved by:
Seconded by:

That the meeting be adjourned at 7:56 pm.

PASSED

13. QUESTION PERIOD

Minutes adopted this 22nd day of July 2025.

Dana Fergusson
Mayor

Certified Correct by Emily Colucci
Acting Senior Administrative Officer