



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
August 19th, 2025 @ 7:00 PM

MINUTES

The Regular meeting of the Council on 09-25 was held on
Tuesday, August 19th, 2025, @ 7 pm within the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Present: Cr. Benwell, Cr. Heaton, Cr. Karasiuk, Cr. Bathe, Mayor Fergusson, Cr. Tuckey and Cr. Cox
Regrets: D/M Keizer and Cr. Couvrette
Staff Present: Tracy Thomas, Senior Administrative Officer
Daniel Wiltzen, Economic and Tourism Development Officer (acting recording secretary)

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

# 25-191	Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk Seconded by: Cr. Benwell
That the agenda be adopted as amended to include a briefing note on section 8 (h) appointment of acting SAO.	
PASSED	

3. DELEGATIONS

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting of Council 08-25

# 25-192	Moved by: Cr. Heaton Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey
That the minutes of the Regular Meeting 08-25 of August 5th, 2025, be adopted as presented.	
PASSED	

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

6. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTEREST

7. ADMINISTRATION

- a. Community Services
 - i. Minutes from the Community Services Standing Committee Meeting on July 15th, 2025
 - ii. Director’s Report

Council received a capital project update regarding 30 new trail-sized garbage bins.



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b. Municipal Services

- i. Minutes from the Corporate Services Standing Committee Meeting on July 15th, 2025
- ii. Director's Report

Cr. Karasiuk noted that the capital project report lists the loader replacement as completed and asked whether this means the work is finished and the loader is on its way back, or if it has already returned to town. SAO Thomas will confirm and let Council know.

c. Briefing Note: Spending Authorities – Public Relations

25-193

Moved by: Cr. Heaton

Seconded by: Cr. Benwell

That Council approve a motion authorizing the Mayor to approve expenditures from the Public Relations budget line up to a maximum of \$1,500 per expenditure, provided the total annual spending does not exceed the approved budget allocation.

PASSED

Cr. Karasiuk asked who else accesses the budget line item and whether there is coordination. He questioned how spending is tracked if the Mayor is authorized to spend up to \$1,500 at a time, and how coordination occurs among all individuals using that budget.

SAO Thomas explained that she is the only other person authorized to spend from that budget line. All expenses run through her and are monitored. She added that her executive secretary may make small purchases, such as lunch for a committee meeting, but only under her or the Mayor's direction.

Mayor Fergusson provided an example related to NWTAC, noting that she had personally purchased gifts for a donation and was later reimbursed. She clarified that these expenses are strictly for Town business, such as gifts for the Prime Minister or contributions for events like the NWTAC table, and not for personal spending.

Cr. Karasiuk noted that while multiple users of the budget could create issues, he acknowledged that with only a few individuals accessing it, this should not be a concern.

SAO Thomas stated that all spending follows the same process, with expenses submitted, recorded, and validated. She noted that reimbursements, such as those for the Mayor's personal purchases made on behalf of the Town, come to her for approval.

Cr. Karasiuk clarified that his concern was ensuring communication, as multiple authorized expenses could quickly use a large portion of the budget. SAO Thomas suggested providing Council with regular quarterly or monthly updates on the public relations budget.

d. Briefing Note: Home Occupation DPA-033-25

25-194

Moved by: Cr. Tuckey

Seconded by: Cr. Heaton

That DPA-033-25, submitted by Cassandra Poitras, to operate the production and sale of baked goods and prepared meals, from Lot 343, Plan 207, 26 Pine Crescent, Fort Smith, be approved.

PASSED



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Cr. Benwell asked whether applications that come through also require a fire safety inspection by the Town, such as from a fire marshal, in addition to food handling checks.

SAO Thomas explained that applicants are advised of the requirement to comply with all relevant codes. She added that she would need to confirm whether Town staff conduct site checks.

Cr. Benwell noted that an application showed health inspection approval but a separate fire safety inspection was still required. She questioned why this occurs and whether it applies to all businesses.

SAO Thomas explained that food inspections and fire compliance are handled separately, with food inspections covering operating kitchens and the fire marshal responsible for fire safety. She added that she would confirm the details and provide a follow-up by email.

Cr. Benwell noted that in the Head Start program, food inspections also cover fire safety. Mayor Fergusson shared that in her own business, a health inspection was not sufficient on its own, as a full fire marshal inspection was also required. She noted that even with a clean health inspection, the fire marshal could shut operations down if fire safety requirements were not met. She explained that fire inspections are more extensive, covering systems such as sprinklers and ensuring everything is up to code, and emphasized that they are a separate process from health inspections.

Cr. Cox observed that the environmental health form appeared to be for the 2025 Farmers Market event permit and asked whether it was a long-term application or specific to the market. SAO will confirm the details and provide a follow-up email.

e. Capital Project Update August 2025

Cr. Cox observed that although the year is more than halfway through, only about 15% of the capital budget has been spent. He asked whether this indicates a need for more capacity in project management or across the board, or if it is typical for capital spending to flow this way.

SAO Thomas responded that the situation is a combination of both limited capacity and the normal flow of capital projects. She explained that while staff are advancing projects as able, some invoices had not yet been received as of July 31, and a few projects were temporarily on hold pending the progress of others and cash flow considerations. She confirmed that both factors contribute to the lower percentage of budget spent to date.

Cr. Karasiuk asked if the Recreation Centre exterior entrance improvements included the entrance to the seniors' room.

SAO Thomas confirmed that the Recreation Centre entrance improvements include both the seniors' entrance and the daycare entrance. She noted the work has been quoted and will be completed once scheduling allows, adding that contractor availability is a factor since smaller projects are often delayed in favor of larger jobs.

Cr. Karasiuk complimented the report for being comprehensive and well-prepared. He asked if it would be possible to add color coding, such as green for projects on track and red for those over budget, to help draw attention to specific items. SAO Thomas noted that she will take that into consideration and see what can be done.



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f. Briefing Note: Appointment of Acting Mayor – August 27 to September 2, 2025

25-195

Moved by: Cr. Benwell

Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That Council appoint Councillor Karasiuk as Acting Mayor for the period of August 27 to September 2, 2025, in accordance with Section 3 of Bylaw 902 – Council Procedures.

PASSED

g. Briefing Note: Procedures for Bringing Forward New Agenda Items, Concerns, or Public Complaints

h. Briefing Note: Appointment of Acting Senior Administrative Officer (SAO) – August 27 – September 3, 2025

25-198

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk

Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That Council, by motion, appoint Jim Hood, Director of Corporate Services, as Acting SAO for the period of August 27 – September 3, 2025.

PASSED

8. COUNCIL BUSINESS

a. Mayor and Council / Board Representatives

- i. Cr. Tuckey expressed his condolences to all families who have lost a loved one in the last month.
- ii. Cr. Cox mentioned that he has been very busy with work over the past couple of weeks and has not had any meetings. He noted that there are many festivals happening that he feels he is missing out on, and he hoped others are enjoying them.
- iii. Cr. Couvrette - excused
- iv. Cr. Benwell reported that the Whooping Crane Festival at the museum went very well and was well attended. She also noted that Salt River hosted a culture camp at Little Buffalo Falls, which was successful and enjoyable, with cool nights and warm mornings. In addition, the Métis held their camp at Salt River, which was also well attended, and she mentioned that bears were present but monitored.
- v. Cr. Heaton shared that she had the privilege of participating in a six-week summer day camp program in Fort Smith. She highlighted and thanked the many community members and organizations that supported the camp, including Alicia and Jenny Cummings, Salt River First Nation (Caitlin Moore), Town staff (Prescott, Daniel, and Austin), Bruce and Jerry for public swimming, Sam and Michelle with the library, Parks Canada (Luke and Taylor), Miss Joan Bevington with tennis, ECC (Angela and Susie), the Junior Wildfire Centre, Arise Trend Stokes, the community garden project, the Fort Smith Animal Shelter, and staff at Baker.

She also introduced an initiative being explored through the Communications Committee called *Just Serve*, an online portal that connects volunteers with local organizations and projects. By registering, organizations can post



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opportunities, and individuals can receive automatic notifications about volunteer needs in their area, such as the food bank, animal shelter, or community events. Cr. Heaton also noted that while Town staff are already at capacity, this tool could centralize volunteer coordination and strengthen community engagement. She intends to bring a presentation to Council for consideration and, if approved, present it to the community.

- vi. Cr. Karasiuk expressed strong support for the *Just Serve* initiative, noting its potential to centralize volunteer information and make it easier for people to know when and where they are needed. He said the program could start small and expand over time, while also giving the Town the ability to track volunteer contributions. This, he added, would help with recognizing outstanding community members through initiatives such as volunteer of the month or year. He credited Cr. Heaton for introducing the idea after attending meetings in Ottawa and for generating enthusiasm within the committee.

He also took a moment to wish the former Director of Community Services well as she begins a new role teaching high school biology, and offered safe travel wishes to local students heading back to post-secondary studies. In addition, he mentioned attending a housing workshop and needs assessment session, which he found informative and included input from Fort Smith’s leadership that may help guide government decision-making

- vii. Cr. Bathe echoed appreciation for the outgoing Director of Community Services, thanking her for her contributions. He also congratulated Damon McAllister on his recent award, noting how meaningful it was to see him receive national recognition, including a mention from the Prime Minister on social media. Cr. Bathe added that it was encouraging to see community members and local organizations, such as those involved in the Uncle Gabe’s Friendship Centre, being recognized for their work and dedication.

- viii. D/M Keizer - excused

- ix. Mayor Fergusson - reported on the recent housing needs assessment, noting it was informative and that Yellowknife is excluded to better reflect the needs of smaller communities. She highlighted discussions with the bylaw committee on the zoning bylaw and reminded Council of the upcoming community consultation on September 8.

She commended the Northern Life Museum and Cultural Centre for their work on the recent TLC event, recognizing specific contributors and noting the event’s likely continuation as an annual tradition.

She advised that a meeting with the Aurora College Board of Governors chair will take place tomorrow, with an update to follow in September. She also reminded the public to use caution in school zones as students return to school.

9. PROCLAMATIONS

10. DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Regular Meeting of Council (Protective & Corporate)	September 9th, 2025 @ 7 pm
Regular Meeting of Council (Community & Municipal)	September 23rd, 2025 @ 7 pm



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11. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

# 25-196	Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk Seconded by: Cr. Benwell
That D/M Keizer and Cr. Couvrette be excused from the Regular Meeting of Council on August 19th, 2025.	
PASSED	

12. ADJOURNMENT

# 25-197	Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk Seconded by: Cr. Heaton
That the meeting be adjourned at 7:36 pm.	
PASSED	

13. QUESTION PERIOD