



**Council of the Town of Fort Smith**  
**November 18, 2025 @ 7:00 PM**

**MINUTES**

The Regular meeting of the Council was held on  
Tuesday, November 18, 2025, @ 7 pm within the Town Hall Council Chambers.

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

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**# 25-273**

**Moved by: Cr. Couvrette**

**Seconded by: Cr. Cox**

That the agenda be adopted as amended to add a briefing note to 7. Administration (k) DPA-056-25.

**PASSED**

**3. DELEGATIONS**

- a. RCMP Monthly Policing Report for October 2025.

It was noted that October was a very transitional month, which everyone is likely aware of. The ongoing state of flux was acknowledged, but it was also noted that things are starting to trend upward, which is encouraging to see. There has been some strong work underway, and next month's report is expected to be more detailed, as it will capture several developments that took place near the end of October and the beginning of November.

The officer explained that the mandatory breathalyzer legislation has been in place for a few years, but many people are still hesitant, unsure, or unhappy about it. He noted that most of the pushback happens during traffic stops, often from individuals who feel singled out. He stressed that officers are not administering tests because they believe someone has been drinking, but because the legislation requires it and provides them with a tool to prevent impaired driving.

He shared examples from his own experience, including cases where someone appeared completely sober but still blew well over the legal limit. He emphasized that mandatory testing is an important preventive measure that helps keep the community safe. The risks and potential loss of life caused by impaired driving are significant, and the legislation helps reduce that danger.

He also spoke about the role of Guardian in the North. Because of the vast distances, low population, and limited cell coverage, the program helps fill gaps by monitoring isolated areas, checking on motorists, and ensuring people can get help if they become stranded. This work addresses real infrastructure challenges across the territory.



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He added that community policing efforts, including Indigenous-led programs, help strengthen relationships and reduce negative perceptions of police. Building positive connections with youth and community members makes it more likely that they will feel safe seeking help or reporting concerns. He appreciated that these efforts had been well received and said the feedback would be shared with the rest of the team.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. Regular Meeting of Council November 4th, 2025

**# 25-274**

**Moved by: Cr. Cox**

**Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey**

That the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 7th, 2025, be adopted as presented.

**PASSED**

**5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**6. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTEREST**

**7. ADMINISTRATION**

- a. Community Services
  - i. Director's Report
- b. Municipal Services
  - i. Director's Report
- c. Briefing Note: Municipal Services Department Roadmap
  - For information

SAO Thomas reported that two consultants from Municipal Management Advisors recently spent several weeks in the community, working closely with staff. They held a SWOT Analysis meeting with multiple departments to ensure data gathered reflected all perspectives and they conducted extensive interviews with staff and worked directly with the department's director.

She noted that the consultants have now developed a five-year roadmap. Administration is working with the director to outline what each year of implementation will look like. The plan also includes an ongoing coaching component, which will be built into the budget. This will give the director the ability to seek guidance when challenges arise, ask for recommendations, and identify useful resources as the plan moves forward.

She explained that the overall goal is to help the department operate more effectively and address existing gaps. One of the most significant issues identified was ongoing attendance concerns. As a result, one of the key recommendations is the creation of a formal attendance program with clear consequences. This program would apply across the entire organization to ensure fairness. It may be implemented in the near future, with consideration for how it fits within the existing progressive discipline process.

Cr. Couvrette added to the earlier conversation about finding creative ways to address attendance issues. He noted that with the organization preparing to enter collective agreement negotiations in 2026, this will be an important opportunity to raise the matter.



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He suggested beginning discussions soon to clarify the Town's position going into the renewal of the collective agreement.

- d. Briefing Note: Draft Water and Sewer System Strategic Plan – Preliminary Findings and 2026 Capital Priorities

**# 25-275**

**Moved by: Cr. Cox**

**Seconded by: D/M Keizer**

That Council receive the Draft Water and Sewer System Strategic Plan findings for information, direct Administration to bring the identified priority projects forward during 2026 Capital Budget deliberation, and that the Mayor and Senior Administrative Officer initiate discussions with the Tłit'at'ine Dënésuliné Nation regarding funding participation in required system upgrades associated with potential piped service expansion.

**PASSED**

- e. Briefing Note: Budget Variance Report as of September 30, 2025  
- For Information

Cr. Karasiuk sought clarification regarding the budget that has been spent year to date.

SAO Thomas reported that the raw water intake and pumphouse replacement project, which represents the largest potential financial impact, has been mostly delayed until next year. The expenditures shown are up to October 31, with some invoices still outstanding.

Much of the major work and higher costs for several projects, including the landfill work recently presented, will occur next year. Although many of these are multi-year projects, the full project values remain in the budget, and the current figures reflect only the first year of spending.

She added that the garbage truck purchase is progressing, but there is a logistical issue. The model selected does not fit through the existing bay doors, so the purchase is temporarily on hold while the Town determines what modifications can be made to accommodate the vehicle.

- f. Briefing Note: Capital Projects Update to October 31, 2025  
- For Information

- g. Briefing Note: Request for Council Support to Advocate to GNWT for Land Swap for Preferred Fire Hall Site

**# 25-276**

**Moved by: Cr. Couvrette**

**Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey**

That Council direct the Mayor to write to GNWT leadership requesting that GNWT work with the Town to pursue a land swap for the property currently used as hospital staff parking, to secure the preferred site for the new Fire Hall.

**PASSED**

SAO Thomas explained that while the topic has been raised with Housing NWT several times, discussions have not progressed beyond the initial conversations. The land in question was originally designated for senior housing, and the Town has been trying to identify alternate Town land that could be offered in exchange. She noted that although the parties expressed openness to further discussion and the Town explored future options, the process stalled.

She said administration is now seeking support from Council to advance this priority project. Until that direction is confirmed, the Town cannot move forward with any design work.



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Cr. Couvrette said his initial question was why the GNWT is not simply transferring the land to the Town for a nominal amount, rather than requiring a land swap, especially given that the parcel was originally designated for senior housing. While the explanation provided clarified the purpose of the swap, it did not address his broader concern about why the GNWT continues to hold such a large amount of land within municipal boundaries. He stated that, in his view, residential lots within the municipality should be under municipal ownership, and if the NWT Housing Corporation wishes to develop units, it should approach the Town to purchase the appropriate lots. He expressed frustration that the GNWT remains a major landowner within the community.

Cr. Cox said that while driving through the area earlier in the day, he found himself thinking about how the lack of planning for parking continues to create problems. He noted that it is not simply a matter of identifying an empty piece of land and designating it for parking, because people end up crossing the road constantly. He compared it to what happened at JBT years ago, when the brown house and greenhouse were removed and the space suddenly became informal parking, which created safety concerns with hundreds of children crossing back and forth.

He said it does not make sense to have parking located on the opposite side of the road if it cannot be safely used in the long term. He wondered whether this point could support the Town's request by offering up parking space below the Health Center as part of the land discussion. His broader goal was to encourage thoughtful, consistent planning across the organization.

h. Briefing Note: Christmas Eve Half-Day

# 25-277

**Moved by: Cr. Cox**

**Seconded by: D/M Keizer**

That all Town facilities close at noon on Wednesday, December 24th, 2025; and That Town staff, dependent on operational needs, will be given a half-day on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Should operational requirements necessitate employment on this noted date, the employee will be given equivalent time off in lieu at a mutually agreed time.

**PASSED**

Director Howes reported that the department has decided to pilot opening the Recreation Centre on select statutory holidays. The first trial took place on Remembrance Day with limited hours, and it was successful. Based on the positive response, the plan is to open again on Boxing Day and New Year's Day, also with restricted hours, likely around noon to 4 p.m. This approach allows staff to spend time with their families while still providing some operational availability for the community.

She noted that feedback after Remembrance Day was very positive, and there was strong engagement on social media when the pilot was announced. The department has also invited public feedback to better understand community interest and determine whether

i. Briefing Note: Santa Claus Parade Road Closure

# 25-278

**Moved by: Cr. Tuckey**

**Seconded by: Cr. Cox**

That Council approves the following road closure for the Santa Claus Parade route: From the Fort Smith Centennial Arena to Rupert Ave., along Simpson St. to McDougal Rd., then to King St., ending at the Community and Recreation Centre, for the duration of the parade.

**PASSED**



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j. Briefing Note: New Year's Eve Fireworks Road Closure

**# 25-279**

**Moved by: Cr. Cox**

**Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette**

That the Council approve the following road closure;  
That Marine Drive, between Mills Street and Walrus Street, will be closed to vehicle traffic from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm on Wednesday, December 31st, 2025, for the annual New Year's Eve fireworks display.

**PASSED**

k. Briefing Note: DPA-056-25

**# 25-280**

**Moved by: Cr. Tuckey**

**Seconded by: Cr. Bathe**

That DPA-056-25, submitted by Brad Bourque, to operate a taxi service, from Lot 1194, Plan 1588, 93 Wilderness Road, Fort Smith, be approved.

**PASSED**

Cr. Karasiuk said that after reviewing the information, he noted that it only refers to a taxi service and does not specify whether the location will also serve as a home office or support space. He asked whether taxi vehicles would be stored on the lot, as there is no clear description of what the home occupation would include.

SAO Thomas explained that her understanding is that the operation will be run by a single individual, with one taxi parked at the residence along with their personal vehicle.

Cr. Tuckey noted that previous taxi companies in the community have all operated from their homes. He said their offices were located within their residences, and their cabs were parked on their personal lots. In his view, this has long been the standard practice.

## **8. IN-CAMERA**

**# 25-281**

**Moved by: D/M Keizer**

**Seconded by: Cr. Cox**

That Council move in-camera at 7:55 pm in accordance with the Cities, Towns, and Villages Act, Section 23(3)(b and c).

**PASSED**

**# 25-282**

**Moved by: Cr. Couvrette**

**Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey**

That Council move out of in-camera at 8:17 pm.

**PASSED**

## **9. COUNCIL BUSINESS**

a. Bylaws and Policies

i. Third Reading Land Administration Bylaw No. 1065

**# 25-283**

**Moved by: Cr. Cox**

**Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette**

That the Land Administration Bylaw No. 1065 be given third and final reading.

**PASSED**



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ii. Third Reading Corporate Seal Bylaw No. 1070

**# 25-284**

**Moved by: Cr. Tuckey**

**Seconded by: Cr. Cox**

That the Corporate Seal Bylaw No. 1070 be given third and final reading.

**PASSED**

iii. First Reading SAO Bylaw No. 1071

**# 25-285**

**Moved by: Cr. Cox**

**Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette**

That the SAO Bylaw No. 1071 be given first reading.

**PASSED**

iv. Second Reading SAO Bylaw No. 1071

**# 25-286**

**Moved by: Cr. Couvrette**

**Seconded by: Cr. Tucky**

That the SAO Bylaw No. 1071 be given second reading.

**PASSED**

b. Mayor and Council / Board Representatives

- i. Cr. Tuckey noted that he had gotten some feedback from the community regarding the audio recording for the last meeting.
- ii. Cr. Cox thanked Town staff for their strong work following the recent snowfall, noting that most roads were cleared within 24 hours. He reminded residents that the level of service in Fort Smith is exceptional compared to many other communities.

He also shared that he and the Director of Protective Services will be attending a Riverbank Erosion Workshop in Yellowknife from December 2 to 4, funded through the NWT Association of Communities. He said he has a solid understanding of the local concerns but encouraged anyone with specific issues related to Riverbank Erosion to contact him.

- iii. Cr. Couvrette expressed appreciation for the community's strong turnout at the Remembrance Day services. He said the well-attended event showed the spirit of the community and the deep respect residents have for veterans and the freedoms their service has provided.
- iv. Cr. Benwell – excused
- v. Cr. Heaton reported that she continues to volunteer with Uncle Gabe's Friendship Centre lunch program, which runs Monday to Friday. She noted that they are once again short on volunteers and encouraged anyone able to help serve hot lunches and support students during the midday break to get involved.

She also highlighted that Sister Sutherland's Thrift Store is in need of volunteers. The volume of donations can be overwhelming, and help is needed to sort items. She said the role is well-suited for teens looking for calm volunteer hours or retirees who enjoy folding and organizing clothing.

Councillor Heaton thanked Sam at the Northern for a recent large food donation to the food bank. She reminded the community that the food bank is open to anyone



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who needs additional food support and operates on Saturdays at 1:30 p.m. in the basement of the church. She added that people can visit both the thrift store and the food bank on the same trip.

She also noted that preparations are underway for the Christmas Maxx Sale at the Northern Life Museum and Cultural Centre, a major annual event. It will take place at the Recreation Centre on Saturday, November 29, from 1 to 4 p.m. She encouraged residents to support local vendors and artisans.

She concluded by wishing good luck to all candidates in the upcoming Salt River First Nation election for Chief and Council.

- vi. Cr. Karasiuk noted that he had just returned from a trip and did not have much to report. He added to Cr. Cox's earlier comments, explaining that on his way back into town, he was following the snowfall warnings and updates on the alert app and on Facebook. He thanked both the Town staff and the territorial highways crews for their work, pointing out that many of those crews are local residents who take real pride in keeping the roads clear. He said the roads were well-maintained all the way back that morning. He closed by saying that while people may complain at times, we live in a great country and a great community, and his recent travels made him even more grateful to be home.
- vii. Cr. Bathe echoed the thanks offered to staff, acknowledging the amount of work involved in keeping roads clear. He noted that after driving from Fort Smith to Yellowknife the previous day, he was reminded that the community has some of the best road conditions in the territory, including in Yellowknife. He also thanked everyone who supported the hockey tournament over the weekend, sharing that his family and friends from Fort Simpson enjoyed the event and had many positive comments about the facility and their experience in town. He expressed his appreciation for the effort everyone continues to put in.
- viii. D/M Keizer provided an update on the Northwest Territories Association of Communities' 60th anniversary AGM, scheduled for February 26 to 28. He noted that a call for motions has gone out and reminded Council that Fort Smith submitted two territorial motions last year, one on the Power Corporation and one on an NWT vision, both of which were accepted for monitoring and forwarded to the GNWT. He encouraged members to consider any new motions, whether Fort Smith-specific or territorial in scope, and to share ideas with him, the SAO, or Mayor Fergusson so they can be compiled.

He added that Council will soon need to decide who will attend the AGM. Room blocks are held until January, after which prices double, so he asked members to review their calendars and be ready to confirm their participation when the request comes forward.

- ix. Mayor Fergusson reported that the letters Council requested at the last meeting have been sent to the appropriate recipients, and she is hoping to receive responses soon. She also shared an update from the TLC, noting that their AGM was held on October 29. Everyone reaffirmed their commitment to the organization, and while financial commitments are still pending, she expects contributions once some political matters wrap up.

She offered special thanks to the organizers of the recent HOBAGO community event, which brought together hockey, volleyball, and dodgeball for all ages and

