



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
January 13, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

McNab commended the volunteers for their hard work and strong performance throughout the year.

The training activity was reduced in December due to the holiday break; however, six training and public outreach sessions were still completed for fire and ambulance planning and development. Some training time was also dedicated to community outreach and Christmas events, which were well attended and appreciated.

Development and planning work continued, with staff focused on tax roll updates and verification during November and December. Several development permits and a small number of business licence permits were also processed. Enforcement activity was slower during the month, with efforts largely limited to responding to public concerns.

Emergency management will be a key focus in the coming months, with work underway to finalize the 2026 Emergency Management Plan, review any changes, and prepare public information ahead of the 2026 wildfire season. This work will include coordination with community partners, the local emergency management organization, and other critical departments to ensure preparedness.

Occupational health and safety activities continued as scheduled, with regular monthly meetings, good attendance, and strong participation. Director McNab noted positive engagement and reporting within the health and safety program.

Overall, the report highlighted a busy and successful December and a highly active year for the department.

Cr. Heaton inquired about the timeline for the animal control bylaw. Director McNab advised that staff are currently working with a contractor to finalize several bylaws, including the one presently under review. A draft has been prepared and is undergoing internal review, with input from the bylaw officer. Feedback has also been received from the Animal Society and is being considered for inclusion where appropriate. Director McNab indicated that the work is expected to progress over the next two to three weeks.

**The chair was transferred to Mayor Fergusson at 7:07 pm.*

Cr. Tuckey asked why the ambulance was parked outside the bay at the hospital. Director McNab explained that there was damage to the ambulance bay door, and it is currently not operational, preventing access in and out of the bay. The ambulance is, however, plugged in. He noted that another ambulance is currently stationed in another area, plugged in and fully ready for use.

ii. Briefing Note: DPA-055-25 Development Application

26-003

Moved by: Cr. Cox

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That DPA-055-25, submitted by Salt River First Nation, for the construction of an Early Learning and Family Enrichment Centre, from Lot 3025, Plan 4091, 265 McDougal Road, Fort Smith, be approved.

PASSED

Cr. Karasiuk asked whether the land, although identified as band land, is considered reserve land, and why the permit application is being brought to the Town. Director McNab noted that he first wished to correct an error in the briefing note before speaking further. He clarified that the property is zoned R2, not R1. He also explained that the Salt River First



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Nation has a municipal services agreement with the Town of Fort Smith, which includes the adoption of

all municipal bylaws, including the Zoning Bylaw. Director McNab added that he was not fully certain of the current status of the land, noting that it was previously federal land.

iii. Briefing Note: Fire Training Facility

26-004

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk

Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That Council approve the quoted price of \$189,439.00 for the purchase and delivery of a Taylor'd Series 40 firefighting trainer facility.

PASSED

Cr. Karasiuk sought clarification as to whether this was a piece of equipment or an actual building.

Director McNab explained that the structure is a 40-foot c-can that has been modified to function as a training facility. The interior includes movable walls that can be reconfigured as needed. It is equipped with a forcible entry door to support breaching training, an enlarged search window trainer to allow for exterior ventilation and second-storey window entry, and a temporary staircase for stair training. The unit can be filled with smoke to support search and suppression training scenarios. Overall, the facility is intended to support a wide range of training activities, short of live fire exercises, and will serve as a single, comprehensive training space.

Cr. Couvrette asked two questions. First, he inquired about the proposed location of the facility. Second, he sought clarification on whether the facility could operate independently, noting that the briefing note described it as one component of a multi-component package. He asked whether the facility would remain functional if the additional components did not proceed in the future due to funding or other constraints.

Director McNab explained that the preferred location for the facility is on land currently under application from the Government of the Northwest Territories, located across Highway 5 from the landfill in a cleared area. If that land were acquired, the proposal would be brought forward to the Council for development approval. As the land acquisition process has taken longer than expected, an interim solution would be to place and use the unit at the landfill, where municipal services have confirmed there is suitable space available. He also noted that preliminary discussions have taken place with the college regarding a potential future training partnership at a more accessible location that would not be near residential areas. The unit is movable and not intended to be permanently fixed to one location.

Director McNab further advised that timing is a key factor, as costs for specialized training containers are expected to increase significantly in the near future. The current pricing reflects older inventory, making early purchase financially advantageous. Placing the unit at the landfill on a temporary or permanent basis is therefore a practical option.

In response to the second question, Director McNab confirmed that the facility is fully functional as a standalone training asset and does not depend on the next phase of the project to be usable. The subsequent phase would involve replacing the live fire burn container. The proposed container would support all training activities other than live fire. He added that, based on current estimates, approximately \$80,000 would remain in the budget for site preparation, such as fencing and potential power installation, depending on the final location. He noted that these details may change as alternative sites continue to be evaluated.



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Cr. Couvrette expressed concern about the ongoing challenges the Town faces in accessing land from the territorial government, particularly for projects related to community safety.

and well-being. He stated that the land transfer process should be straightforward and questioned why the municipality continues to face delays and administrative barriers when the intended use clearly serves the public interest. Cr. Couvrette suggested that this issue be raised at an upcoming NWT AC meeting and noted that the Mayor may wish to discuss the matter directly with the Minister to encourage a more timely and practical approach to land transfers within municipal boundaries.

b. Corporate Services

i. Director's Report

A discussion was held regarding the infographic that accompanied the property assessments. Cr. Heaton asked whether the infographic would be posted online, including on Facebook. Director McNab advised that he and Cassandra, Director of Corporate Services, are working on additional communications related to the assessments.

There was a discussion regarding uptake under the HAF program, and Cr. Couvrette asked whether Administration could bring forward a briefing note with the relevant information.

Director McNab advised that, if a report is requested, he can work with Administration to prepare one. He also noted that 10 new units have been applied for under the program, ranging from single-family detached homes to fourplex units.

ii. Account's Paid List

Cr. Couvrette sought clarification as to whether cheque 43534 for the Paddle Club annual contribution was for 2025 or 2026. Mayor Fergusson noted that it was for the 2025 annual contribution.

Cr. Couvrette raised a question regarding the paid activity listings, noting two separate amounts related to MasterCard payments. He asked for assurance that MasterCard purchases are being made in accordance with the Town's procurement policy and, where practical, are supporting local suppliers. His concern was to ensure that the use of MasterCard does not bypass local contractors or established procurement processes, particularly while the policy is pending update as part of the bylaw review process.

Mayor Fergusson advised that multiple staff review and approve purchases before they are finalized. She noted that many of the MasterCard transactions, particularly within Community Services, relate to items such as library books, videos, and other specialized materials that are not readily available locally. She explained that similar situations apply to Protective Services, where certain specialized equipment cannot be sourced within the community. The Mayor emphasized that local procurement is used wherever possible and that the Town spends a significant amount with local businesses. Based on her review, she stated that procurement practices are being followed appropriately and consistently.

iii. Correspondence

c. Briefing Note: Appointment of Deputy Mayor

26-005

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Council, by resolution and on the recommendation of the Mayor, appoint Deputy Mayor Keizer for a one-year term in accordance with The Council Procedures Bylaw No. 902, Section 6(c)(i).

PASSED



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8. COUNCIL BUSINESS

a. Bylaws and Policies

- i. Third and Final Reading of the Land Disposal 9 Whitford Ave Bylaw No. 1074

26-006

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk

Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That the Land Disposal of Lot 1758, Plan 4330, 9 Whitford Rd. Bylaw No. 1074 is to be given its third and final reading.

PASSED

b. Mayor and Council Round Table

- i. Cr. Cox noted that there have been a few new HAF applications, even though no recent meetings have been held. He added that some activity under the program is still moving forward. He also reminded residents to use caution on the roads due to warmer temperatures causing slippery conditions, particularly at four-way intersections and stop signs. Cr. Cox further mentioned that a large women's hockey tournament is taking place over the weekend, which may increase traffic in the community.
- ii. Cr. Couvrette gave kudos to the Public Works Department for the continued high quality of their maintenance work, particularly given the significant amount of snow the community has received this year.
- iii. Cr. Benwell extended well wishes to everyone in Fort Smith, expressing hope that residents had a safe and enjoyable holiday season with adequate food and warmth during the extreme cold. She also thanked those who looked out for dogs that were outdoors in the cold and wished everyone all the best in the new year.
- iv. Cr. Heaton shared that she recently worked several morning shifts at the animal shelter and emphasized the ongoing need for volunteers across many community organizations, particularly youth who are required to complete volunteer hours for graduation. She highlighted the animal shelter as one such opportunity. Cr. Heaton also noted the upcoming community wellness open houses with Salt River, describing them as an exciting and valuable initiative for the community. She emphasized the importance of Indigenous-owned and led healing spaces and encouraged residents to support local organizations by getting involved in volunteer efforts.
- v. Cr. Karasiuk noted that he stayed in the community over the Christmas holidays, which he had not done in some time. He acknowledged the cold weather but said he still enjoyed being able to relax and spend the time locally. He concluded by wishing everyone a happy and healthy new year.
- vi. Cr. Bathe – excused
- vii. D/M Keizer advised that resolutions are being sought by the end of January for consideration at the NWT AC AGM in February. He noted that only one idea has been raised so far, originating from Mayor Fergusson, related to college campuses and future Government of the Northwest Territories plans for their use, though further development of that idea is still required. He encouraged Council members to bring forward any additional resolutions, noting that submissions are typically more



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effective when they have a broader territorial perspective rather than being specific to Fort Smith. He also noted that two resolutions were submitted last year, and both were accepted.

D/M Keizer also acknowledged the recent fire response outside of town, stating that he has heard very positive feedback from both those involved and the community. He commended the responders for their professionalism and efforts, noting that out-of-town responses can be especially challenging, and expressed appreciation for the work done.

- viii. Mayor Fergusson congratulated the athletes who participated in the Arctic Winter Games trials held recently in Yellowknife, acknowledging the dedication it takes to compete at an elite level and reaffirming the community's support for them as they move forward.

She advised that the Mayor and Council leadership recently met for a strategic planning session, which she described as productive and collaborative. Through that discussion, three shared priority areas were identified: the college, community infrastructure, and water. Mayor Fergusson noted that Council is aligned on these priorities and has a clear path forward with planned outcomes and timelines, which will be shared once further details are available.

The Mayor also thanked Council for their participation in the budget workshop held before the New Year, noting that it involved a thorough, line-by-line review of the operations and maintenance budget and resulted in meaningful and constructive discussion. She stated that she looks forward to continuing those conversations informally.

She reported that the Human Resources Committee has been very active and expressed optimism that there may soon be positive news regarding a potential candidate to meet the Town's SAO needs. She also noted that the Bylaw Committee is scheduled to meet next week, and if successful, new bylaws may be brought forward for Council's review and approval.

Finally, Mayor Fergusson encouraged Council to reflect on the future role of the Town's advisory boards. She noted that these groups are intended to advise Council on community issues, but currently lack clear direction or assigned tasks. She emphasized the need to better define how advisory boards can support Council by gathering and providing relevant community information.

- ix. Cr. Tuckey shared his hope that 2026 will be a good year for the community. He spoke about enjoying time over the holidays with his granddaughter and great granddaughter, including taking them out for lunch, and shared a lighthearted moment about his great granddaughter being distracted by Santa Claus.

He also raised a public safety concern, noting that he observed foxes crossing the road near the church site and behind the Northern Store, and wanted to make residents aware of wildlife activity in that area. In addition, he reported witnessing a vehicle go through a four-way stop and expressed concern about the current road conditions. Cr. Tuckey noted that the roads are very poor, travel conditions have been challenging, and the forecast suggests conditions may worsen. He encouraged everyone to use extra caution while driving.

9. PROCLAMATIONS

Council discussed chemical sensitivity and awareness, and would like the Mayor to make a proclamation on the topic closer to the event date in May.



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10. DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Regular Meeting of Council (Community & Municipal)	January 20 th , 2026, @ 7 pm, chaired by Cr. Couvrette
Regular Meeting of Council (Protective & Corporate)	February 3 rd , 2026, @ 7 pm,

11. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

26-007 **Moved by: Cr. Cox**
 Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That Cr. Bathe be excused from the Regular Meeting of Council on January 13th, 2026.

PASSED

12. IN-CAMERA SESSION

26-008 **Moved by: Mayor Fergusson**
 Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Council move in-camera at 7:46 pm in accordance with the Cities, Towns, and Villages Act, Section 23(3) (e).

PASSED

26-009 **Moved by: Mayor Fergusson**
 Seconded by: Cr. Cox

That Council move out of in-camera at 8:21 pm.

PASSED

13. QUESTION PERIOD

14. ADJOURNMENT

26-010 **Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk**
 Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette

That the meeting be adjourned at 8:22 pm.

PASSED

Minutes adopted this 20th day of January 2026.

Dana Fergusson
Mayor

Certified Correct by Jim Hood
Senior Administrative Officer

