



Council of the Town of Fort Smith
February 3, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

MINUTES

The Regular meeting of the Council was held on
Tuesday, February 3, @ 7 pm within the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Present: Mayor Fergusson, D/M Keizer, C. Benwell, Cr. Karasiuk, Cr. Tuckey, Cr. Cox, and Cr. Couvrette
Regrets: Cr. Bathe and Cr. Heaton
Staff Present: Jim Hood, Senior Administrative Officer
Daniel Wiltzen, Acting Recording Secretary
Adam McNab, Director of Protective Services
Cassandra Gibbons, Director of Corporate Services
Lauren Howes, Director of Community Services

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a. Mayor Fergusson confirms quorum, reads the Acknowledgment of First Nations and hands the chair to Cr. Couvrette.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

26-016

Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk

Seconded by: Mayor Fergusson

That the agenda be adopted as amended to add a delegation by the RCMP.

PASSED

3. DELEGATIONS

- a. RCMP Monthly Policing Report

Constable Kleaman provided a policing update for the month of January and responded to questions related to public safety communications and notification thresholds. He reported that during January, RCMP officers arrested and charged one individual with possession for the purpose of trafficking after approximately 10 grams of cocaine were seized. He noted that enforcement efforts targeting drug-related activity in the community are ongoing.

Constable Kleaman also advised that there were two incidents in January where the RCMP were required to guard individuals apprehended under the Mental Health Act at the hospital. He indicated that these incidents are being tracked for transparency and monitoring purposes.

In discussing public safety notifications, Constable Kleaman explained that RCMP decisions are guided by policy considerations such as severity and urgency. Each situation is assessed based on the totality of circumstances, including whether there is a risk to public safety and the nature of that risk. Depending on the assessment, different response thresholds apply.

He noted that in some recent incidents, the threshold for issuing a broader public alert was not met. However, he personally attended the school on one or two occasions and spoke directly with the principal to provide situational awareness and explain where matters stood at the time. He acknowledged that more proactive communication in future situations could assist schools in making informed decisions.



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Constable Kleaman explained that there is a defined threshold at which direct communication with schools would occur. If the severity of an incident were judged to be high and posed a clear safety concern to staff or students, direct notification would be made, potentially including measures such as a school lockdown. He confirmed that a communication channel does exist for such circumstances when there is a perceived risk to school safety.

He added that while the RCMP does communicate directly with schools in situations involving lockdowns, he has not personally had to manage such a scenario during his time in the community. As a result, he could not state with certainty whether future communications would come directly from local RCMP members or through media relations, as this would depend on the circumstances and the level of response required.

Constable Kleaman concluded by offering to provide written information outlining alert categories and thresholds for reference and invited further questions related to public safety.

Mayor Fergusson referenced the recent passage of new missing persons legislation and asked how it applies to ongoing cases in the community. She specifically inquired whether the Missing Persons Act has any impact on the active missing person investigation involving Frank Gruben and whether the legislation provides additional tools or authority that could assist the RCMP in that investigation.

Mayor Fergusson further asked whether there were any updates available regarding the status of the investigation and whether the new legislation supports continued efforts in locating Mr. Gruben.

Constable Kleaman advised that the missing person investigation remains active and ongoing. He confirmed that an RCMP member continues to conduct investigative work within the community and that further steps are planned to continue advancing the investigation.

He noted that he had not yet reviewed the newly passed Missing Persons Act in detail. However, based on initial information he had received, he understood that the legislation may provide additional authority to allow police to act more quickly in time-sensitive situations.

Constable Kleaman indicated that he would review the legislation more thoroughly and follow up with further clarification from his perspective once he had a better understanding of its provisions.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting of Council January 20th, 2026

26-017

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: D/M Keizer

That the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 20th, 2026, be adopted as presented.

PASSED

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

6. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTEREST

7. ADMINISTRATION



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a. Protective Services

i. Director's Report

Director McNab advised that fire and ambulance call volumes were slightly below average for the month, which was a positive change following a higher-than-normal call volume over the past year. Call numbers were noted to be close to the rolling five-year average. He reported that the department responded to 26 calls in total during January.

Director McNab also referenced a total loss structure fire in Alberta, just over the border, which occurred shortly before the previous meeting and was attended by the department. He noted that staff performed well during that response.

He advised that fire training is currently underway and that this year's focus has shifted toward scenario-based training. This follows the completion of NFPA 1001 skills-based training, with the intent of applying those skills in more practical, real-world scenarios.

Director McNab reported that an Emergency Medical Responder course has recently begun in-house for new recruits. Once completed, this is expected to add approximately eight new EMRs to the ambulance roster.

He also highlighted that the department is running a Wounded Warriors trauma resiliency training course. This initiative supports mental resiliency and wellness within the fire department and is being integrated into departmental standard operating procedures. He noted that this training is expected to benefit staff when responding to difficult and traumatic calls.

Director McNab advised that a Wildland Urban Interface course has been scheduled for the first weekend of May and has been confirmed. The course aligns with Alberta's Wildland Urban Interface training program and will be delivered by Rodney Schmidt, former Fire Chief of High Level. He expressed optimism that the course will be well attended.

He also provided an update on organizational changes, noting a reorganization that introduces a new Protective Services Coordinator and Deputy Fire Chief role. He explained that the Lands and Development Officer has been assisting with bylaw enforcement, but that role is substantial on its own. The new position will provide bylaw enforcement support, allowing the Lands and Development Officer to focus more fully on their primary responsibilities. Director McNab indicated he is working with existing staff to implement these changes.

He concluded by noting that Occupational Health and Safety matters were routine for the month and that there were several updates related to capital projects, which were included in the written report.

Mayor Fergusson expressed support for the progress being made on draft bylaws and noted that several new or updated bylaws are expected to come forward. She referenced a recent discussion with SAO Hood and emphasized the importance of modernizing bylaws to better reflect current needs.

She also shared an example she had read about community emergency preparedness practices in Finland, where preparedness is approached as a whole community effort. She described how communities there engage residents broadly, either through community-wide initiatives or smaller group-based efforts, to ensure people are better prepared to respond during emergencies.



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Mayor Fergusson asked whether this type of community-focused emergency preparedness model aligns with current planning or thinking around emergency response and preparedness initiatives within the community.

Director McNab explained that emergency planning is conducted on an annual basis in coordination with community partners across all levels of government and the private sector. As part of this process, partners are asked to share their emergency plans so that potential impacts and alignment with the Town's plans can be reviewed and coordinated.

He advised that internal tabletop exercises are conducted to test the Town's emergency plans, and that key partners are engaged in these exercises where possible. He noted that bringing all partners together is a shared responsibility and is supported through the Local Emergency Management Organization, which convenes in early spring to review plans, discuss coordination, and identify areas where partners may require assistance with their emergency planning.

Director McNab also highlighted a specific focus on wildfire preparedness. He advised that the Town is exploring the possibility of an interface response planning project, which could involve engaging a third party to conduct GIS mapping. This work would further identify and map critical infrastructure and support more detailed planning around wildland urban interface response.

He explained that this planning would align with FireSmart principles, vegetation management planning, and operational response measures such as sprinklering during wildfire events. He noted that the intent is to strengthen emergency plans with more operational detail and confirmed that community partners would be engaged as these initiatives move forward.

Mayor Fergusson followed up on the discussion around emergency preparedness with comments related to fire breaks and vegetation management. She raised the importance of actively maintaining existing fire breaks to ensure vegetation does not regrow and that the areas remain clear of debris. She noted that unmanaged regrowth could reduce the effectiveness of fire breaks during a wildfire event.

Mayor Fergusson suggested exploring practical and community-based approaches to help maintain these areas. She referenced the possibility of allowing or encouraging controlled use of fire breaks, or partnering with local groups or organizations, as a way to keep vegetation from re-establishing and to ensure the fire breaks remain accessible and functional.

She asked whether there may be opportunities to work with community groups to support ongoing maintenance of fire breaks as part of broader wildfire mitigation and preparedness efforts.

Director McNab acknowledged that the approach discussed is an option that could be considered. However, he noted that the community has generally responded well to the use of managed green spaces as part of firebreak and vegetation management efforts. He explained that this approach is relatively low-cost, as it relies on annual mowing that has already been established.

Director McNab highlighted that the current method avoids issues such as noise, disruption, erosion, and potential environmental damage that could result from more aggressive or uncontrolled use of these areas. He emphasized that a vegetation management process is already in place and is supported through the approved budget.



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He added that while alternative approaches could be explored if supported by Mayor and Council, the existing management strategy is currently effective and funded.

Cr. Tuckey noted that quads also start fires.

Karasiuk referred to the section of the report addressing the fire training grounds and asked for clarification on the wording indicating that the Lands Department is being engaged. He questioned what was meant by the term “engaged” and asked whether this indicated that the department had been contacted and a response was still pending.

Director McNab advised that the issue had been raised at a previous council meeting and acknowledged the frustration with the length of time required to receive responses.

He explained that the delay is not due to a lack of engagement from the GNWT Lands Department or ECC. Rather, the matter is currently tied up in a lengthy consultation process. He noted that the Town has responded to questions arising from consultation and that ECC must now take that information back to the relevant groups for another round of consultation.

Director McNab emphasized that while the Town views the matter as a public safety priority, there are still required government processes that must be followed. He confirmed that staff continue to work with the departments involved and remain hopeful that the process will be completed in due course.

Cr. Karasiuk referenced the Request for Proposals process for the new fire hall and noted that he had reviewed the information with interest. He asked for clarification on the anticipated timeline for the RFP process and sought to understand whether the expected timeframe was approximately six months, one year, or another duration.

Director McNab explained that discussions over the past several years have focused on the future of the current building and how its condition may influence plans for a new fire hall. He noted that consideration has been given to whether the existing building remains viable, whether it should be renovated and expanded, or whether it would make sense to combine a future town hall with a new fire hall.

He advised that, in discussions with SAO Hood, staff have decided to issue a Request for Proposals to assess the viability of the existing building. The RFP will seek an evaluation of whether the building can be renovated and expanded to meet a future town hall needs assessment. If viable, the RFP would also request Class C or Class B cost estimates for renovation and expansion.

Director McNab further explained that the assessment would include a needs analysis for a town hall, cost estimates for demolition of the former library, and an evaluation of parking requirements, including whether parking needs would be met once the library is removed.

He noted that once this information is available, staff will be able to proceed with more detailed planning for the fire hall, including developing cost estimates with and without a combined town hall component. This information will be brought forward to Council to help determine whether it is more appropriate to renovate and expand the existing town hall site or to incorporate a town hall into a new fire hall development.



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Director McNab advised that the RFP document is a priority and is expected to be completed within the week, with the intent to issue it shortly thereafter. He added that timelines will depend on responses from proponents, and once that process is complete, staff intend to move forward with the next phase of planning.

Cr. Karasiuk sought clarification on the expected timeline for completing the needs assessment and the Request for Proposals process. He asked whether the combined process would take approximately six months or if a different timeframe was anticipated.

Director McNab advised that he is hopeful the turnaround time for the needs assessment and RFP process will be shorter than six months. He indicated that his expectation is a three to four month timeframe, noting that the actual schedule will depend on contractor availability and the timelines proposed by successful proponents. He added that a more definitive timeline will be known once responses to the RFP are received.

Mayor Fergusson asked whether the needs assessment would take into account the operating and maintenance costs associated with different building options. She specifically questioned whether the assessment would compare the ongoing operating and maintenance implications of maintaining two separate facilities versus combining the town hall and fire hall into a single building, as part of evaluating whether to renovate the existing facility or pursue a combined development.

Director McNab explained that the current needs analysis is focused primarily on space requirements. He noted that operating and maintenance considerations will be reviewed once there is clarity on whether the existing building is viable for retrofit.

He advised that if the building is found to be viable, staff will then assess the projected operating and maintenance costs of maintaining the retrofitted facility, and compare those costs to maintaining a building of similar size. He added that this assessment cannot be completed until the needs analysis and viability review are finalized.

Director McNab confirmed that the evaluation will include a detailed review of the building's mechanical, electrical, insulation, and building envelope systems. Any proposed retrofit would include improvements aimed at increasing energy efficiency. He noted, however, that actual efficiencies and associated operating and maintenance costs will not be known until this analysis is complete.

He further indicated that operating and maintenance expenses will be considered as part of the overall cost evaluation. He added that it is not yet clear whether combining the town hall with a fire hall would result in significant operating savings, as this would depend on the extent to which systems such as mechanical services could be shared and duplication reduced.

Cr. Cox referenced a previous discussion from the summer or fall regarding burned structures within the community. He asked whether there have been any updates on this issue or if progress is expected to resume in the spring, and requested clarification on the current status.

Director McNab confirmed that of the four burned structures in the community, three now have development permits in place for demolition and removal of debris. He noted that he was uncertain whether those permits also include plans for rebuilding. He advised that the remaining property is associated with personal challenges involving the homeowner or property owner, and that staff are continuing to work with the individual on the matter.



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ii. Briefing Note: Fire Training Live Structure

26-018

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Karasiuk

That Council approve the quoted price of \$200,00.00 for the purchase and delivery of a Drager Flashover structure and the associated-on site training and delivery outlined in the attached quote.

PASSED

Cr. Karasiuk asked whether the item being discussed represents the second part of a two-part process that had previously been approved by Council.

Director McNab confirmed that the item is the second part of the previously approved process and relates to the capital line approved in the 2025 budget. He advised that the total approved capital budget was \$463,000. Of that amount, \$189,439 was committed during the first phase. He noted that this second phase will leave a remaining balance of \$73,561 within that capital budget line.

D/M Keizer advised that after reviewing the material, he had questions regarding the training and maintenance requirements associated with the equipment. He asked whether the organization has the capacity to manage the required level of training and ongoing maintenance internally, or whether this would result in a recurring annual cost to bring in external trainers to train staff on the use of the equipment.

Director McNab advised that the required training is included in the purchase price and is outlined in the proposal. He noted that approximately \$24,000 is allocated for training, which will involve bringing in external trainers initially.

He explained that the department operates as an NFPA-trained organization and has certified fire instructors, including NFPA 1041 instructors. Once the initial training is completed, the department will have the internal capacity and qualifications required to deliver the training going forward, eliminating the need for ongoing external training support.

Cr. Tuckey raised questions regarding potential additional costs and risk considerations associated with the proposed training. He asked whether there would be added expenses related to insurance coverage, legal advice, or workers' compensation, noting that flash fire training carries inherent risk and that serious injuries and fatalities have occurred in similar training elsewhere.

Cr. Tuckey also asked how insurance coverage would be addressed, what role workers' compensation would play, and whether there would be any involvement from the union in relation to firefighter safety, coverage, and risk management.

Director McNab explained that firefighters are not unionized employees but are covered under workers' compensation through WSCC. He confirmed that the department is insured to operate a fire department and to carry out all associated activities, including training and live fire exercises.

He advised that, from a WSCC perspective, the department would be non-compliant if it expected firefighters to perform this work without providing the appropriate level of training. He noted that providing this training is a WSCC requirement.

Director McNab acknowledged that live fire training carries inherent risk, which is why the department intends to use professional instructors initially and then maintain the training



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internally. He emphasized that firefighter safety is a priority and stated that he would not place firefighters at unnecessary risk.

He further explained that failing to provide proper training while assigning firefighters to enter burning structures would expose the Town to greater legal liability than providing the training. He confirmed that insurance coverage applies to all fire department operations, including live fire training.

Director McNab also noted that the department currently uses a live fire training prop for exercises such as simulated flashovers and backdrafts, but that this equipment is no longer safe to use. As a result, it needs to be replaced with a safer alternative, which he noted is standard practice for fire departments.

Cr. Tuckey asked whether there may be an opportunity to involve other communities or jurisdictions within the territories in the training or use of the facility, potentially on a cost recovery basis.

Director McNab advised that the Town would be the only community in the North with this specific type of training unit. He noted that Hay River has a multi story burn structure, which they have allowed the Town to use at no cost for several years to help maintain certification. He described this as a cooperative, reciprocal relationship where communities support one another and aim to keep costs neutral where possible.

He explained that cost recovery opportunities could be considered. He highlighted that one of the key advantages of the proposed unit is that it is mobile and mounted on a trailer. This allows it to be transported to other communities if needed.

Director McNab noted that the mobile option was more cost effective than constructing a permanent structure, as the Town does not have the capacity to install screw piles and on-site assembly would have required extensive welding and higher installation costs. Because the unit does not require a foundation, it reduces construction complexity and expense. He added that there are similar mobile training units in use elsewhere and that the portability of this unit creates opportunities for regional collaboration and shared use.

Cr. Cox asked a follow up question regarding the mobility of the training unit. He noted that, while the unit is on wheels, it appears to require a fifth wheel and air brake system to transport. He asked whether moving the unit would require a specialized vehicle and whether the Town, the Department of Infrastructure, or local contractors would have the appropriate equipment to transport it when needed.

Director McNab advised that transporting the unit would require a standard tractor. He noted that once the unit is delivered to the chosen site, it is not expected to be moved and would be blocked and set in place for long-term use. He added that the unit would only be relocated if the training site changes or if Council supports using it for training in other communities, as previously discussed by Cr. Tuckey.

b. Corporate Services

i. Director's Report

Director Gibbons advised that January was a particularly busy month for administrative and financial activities. She noted that significant effort was focused on closing out 2025 and ensuring all financial matters were properly aligned, particularly following the late adoption of the budget. As part of this work, the Town was able to resolve all outstanding claims with the Government of the Northwest Territories related to the 2023 wildfire activity.



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She also noted a brief visit from MACA personnel regarding property assessments and advised that staff are working with Daniel to enhance social media outreach efforts.

Director Gibbons reported that recruitment for the Senior Administrative Officer position is ongoing and progressing well. She also confirmed the successful recruitment of a maternity leave replacement for the payroll position and introduced the Town's newest administrative team member, who began work the previous day and is integrating well into her role and training.

She advised that, alongside the ongoing revision of the Town's bylaw library, staff have begun drafting a repeal and replace bylaw for Records and Information Management. She explained that the existing bylaw functions largely as a records retention and destruction schedule. The intent of the new bylaw is to align municipal practices with territorial and federal legislation, update existing retention items, and introduce new provisions addressing digital records and metadata. She noted that a small training component is expected to accompany this work to ensure staff understand how to access and interpret metadata as part of the Town's records and information framework.

Director Gibbons also advised that her department worked with the Department of Community Services to develop a training exercise related to cash handling practices. She reported that the training was successful and that there are plans to continue the partnership to provide additional training. The goal, she noted, is to ensure frontline staff are confident in their cash handling responsibilities and that practices align with existing workflows and reconciliation requirements.

D/M Keizer asked whether it would be appropriate to explain why the assessment representatives ended their work early. He noted that he had met with them shortly before the update and indicated that the reason was generally understood, but asked whether it could be clarified for the record.

SAO Hood explained that the assessors visited the community and met with several property owners before identifying a technical error in the assessment notices that had been issued. The error related to how property assessments were calculated.

Once the issue was identified, the assessors determined it was necessary to return to their office to correct the error and prepare revised assessment notices. SAO Hood advised that the corrected notices are expected to be issued by the end of the week.

He clarified that the revised notices will be mailed to property owners who have **improvements on their properties that were constructed prior to 2024**. Vacant properties are not affected, and assessment notices for vacant properties remain valid as originally issued, including the appeal period.

SAO Hood noted that property owners with questions are encouraged to contact the phone number listed on the back of their assessment notices. Assessors will be able to provide the same information that would have been shared locally. He added that, if necessary, assessors will reassess properties when they return to the community for the board of revision.

Mayor Fergusson asked for clarification on the outcome of the Town's 2023 wildfire claim. She inquired whether the Town was left with any unrecovered costs or whether all expenses submitted as part of the wildfire claim were fully reimbursed.

Director Gibbons advised that the Town was reimbursed for all expenses that were intended and submitted as part of the wildfire claim. She noted that there had been one outstanding submission that had not yet been resolved; however, through the final



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submission, that matter was also addressed. She confirmed that this concluded all outstanding business related to the wildfire claim.

ii. Account's Paid List

Cr. Tuckey noted concerns regarding two cheques, and the potential of double payment.

Director Gibbons advised that while she was in the process of confirming the details against her records, she could state that all payments issued through the accounts payable department are made in response to existing invoices.

She explained that the Town's financial management software is used to process these payments and that this system makes it highly unlikely for duplicate payments to occur. She added that, prior to providing written confirmation, she was confident that the payments in question were issued as individual payments.

SAO Hood advised that Lumen supplies conducts boiler checks at the water treatment plant. He explained that boiler inspections are required to be completed daily, with records maintained for boiler pressure and related operational data. He noted that this service is provided on an ongoing basis, month after month. As a result, he indicated that it would be very likely for invoices from Lumen to be the same amount for consecutive months.

iii. Correspondence

Mayor Fergusson explained that the correspondence under discussion was a response to a letter she had sent to MLA J. MacDonald regarding oil sands tailings and downstream impacts on the Slave River Delta.

She noted that, while the response letter did not explicitly state it, MLA McDonald advised her to follow up with the Honourable Julie Dabrusin, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada. Acting on that advice, Mayor Fergusson forwarded the same letter and information to the federal minister.

She explained that she elevated the matter in this way to strengthen the message and increase its impact, noting that a larger and more unified voice would be beneficial. She indicated that this was the reason for the delay in bringing the matter forward further.

Cr. Benwell referenced a letter received from Shari Olson regarding ice conditions. She expressed concern that the ice was not safe, particularly for figure skaters. While she noted uncertainty about the impact on hockey players, she emphasized that her primary concern related to safety issues for figure skating activities.

SAO Hood advised that an email was received at approximately 4:00 p.m. that afternoon, which had been forwarded to him by the Director. He noted that staff would be meeting with the facilities maintenance crews the following day to review the condition of the ice and discuss potential actions to improve safety. He indicated that once those discussions take place, any relevant updates or recommendations would be brought forward at the next meeting.

D/M Keizer referred to the item titled *Application of Multi Research* that was provided for information and noted that it was an interesting read. He asked for clarification on the Town's role in the research being conducted in the community, specifically whether the Town's involvement is limited to being informed or whether a report or other outcomes would be provided once the research is completed.



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Mayor Fergusson advised that the information was being shared for awareness purposes. She explained that this would allow the Town to respond appropriately if residents raised questions about being approached for information or research participation. She noted that having this information on hand would help confirm that the researchers are legitimately working in the community and clarify the process being used to collect information if inquiries arise.

D/M Keizer asked whether there is any requirement for the researchers to provide the Town with their findings once the study is completed, or whether there is no formal follow-up and the matter simply concludes at that point.

Mayor Fergusson referenced a previous visit by Spark, noting that they had presented to Council on initiatives focused on health sciences and encouraging youth to pursue careers in nursing and health care.

She explained that Spark continues to provide regular updates and keeps the Town informed through ongoing communication. She noted that a similar approach could be requested from the researchers conducting work in the community, adding that while the Town may not require formal research reporting, these groups can be more proactive in sharing information and updates if asked.

Cr. Couvrette noted that the Aurora Research Institute is currently the authoritative body in the Northwest Territories responsible for issuing research permits and that it has a fairly extensive consultation process. He explained that distributing letters such as these fulfills the Institute's consultation requirements.

He further noted that as Aurora College continues to mature and transition toward a polytechnic model, there has been ongoing discussion about the need to change the research permitting process. He suggested that future changes could help ensure the Territories retain greater ownership of, or at least receive more information from, research conducted within the jurisdiction.

Cr. Couvrette added that, at present, a significant portion of research conducted in the Territories concludes without any follow-up information being shared with communities, and expressed hope that this would improve as the process evolves.

c. Briefing Note: Appointment of Acting Mayor – February 25 – March 2, 2026

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| # 26-019 | Moved by: Mayor Fergusson Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey |
| That Council appoint Councillor Al Karasiuk as Acting Mayor for the period of February 25 to March 2, 2026, in accordance with Section 3 of Bylaw 902 – Council Procedures. | |
| 6 in favor, 1 abstained Motion PASSED | |

d. Briefing Note: Wood Buffalo Frolics Half-Day Civic Holiday

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| # 26-020 | Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk Seconded by: Cr. Benwell |
| That Council declare Friday, March 6, 2026, from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. (Mountain Time) as the half-day civic holiday for the Wood Buffalo Frolics, in accordance with Bylaw 1004. | |
| PASSED | |



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- e. User Group Agreement – Slide Zone Shredderz Snowboard Club
- For Information Only

Mayor Fergusson sought clarification regarding the use of the facility and the absence of a financial arrangement with the group occupying it. She asked whether the Town is not charging rental fees because the group is maintaining the aging facility and providing the Town with continued access.

She also clarified her understanding that the group has sole use of one portable, while the washroom facility remains accessible to the public at any time of day. She asked whether this arrangement explains why no rental fee is being charged for use of the space.

Director Howes explained that the arrangement is considered an in-kind relationship, as the group carries out a significant amount of maintenance and grooming of the facility. She clarified that washroom access is available to the group during their scheduled events and to the public when the Town is hosting events at the site. Outside of those times, the washroom facility is to remain locked unless an event is taking place. She noted that this is why the group is required to notify the Town in advance when they will be using the facility.

Mayor Fergusson sought clarification regarding summer time usage. Director Howes advised that during the summer months the facilities are generally closed. She noted that they may be opened on occasion when the nearby ball diamonds are in use.

- f. Support Request – NWT Snowboard Association Territorial Competition

26-021

Moved by: Mayor Fergusson

Seconded by: Cr. Karasiuk

That Council approve the in-kind amount of \$1,768.61 for the provision of tables, chairs, sound equipment, two recreation support staff, a garbage dumpster, and a temporary road closure and blockage of Marine Drive (from Mills St to Wapiti St) from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on February 27th 28th & March 1st, 2026., in support of the NWT Snowboard Association Territorial Competition.

PASSED

- g. SAO Report

SAO Hood provided a formal update on recent and upcoming financial and operational activities.

He advised that the 2026 budget, which Council passed in January, was the result of a highly collaborative and detailed process. Over a two month period, directors met weekly to review the budget line by line, justify requested increases, and identify areas for potential reductions. He emphasized that this was a thorough and cooperative effort among directors and expressed appreciation for the significant work and collaboration involved in preparing the budget.

With the budget now approved, SAO Hood advised that the next step is a review of the consolidated rates and fees bylaw. Certain fee increases were identified during the budget process, and staff will begin reviewing the bylaw to confirm where adjustments are required. This review will also include comparing last year's actual revenues against projected revenues to determine whether expectations were met. Where shortfalls are identified, fee increases may be proposed.

He noted that increases have already been identified for ambulance fees and within the environmental budget, specifically a projected shortfall that will require an increase of



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approximately 2.5 percent to the solid waste levy. He advised that this increase would amount to less than \$20 per year but is necessary to balance the budget. Staff will begin this work immediately, with the consolidated rates and fees bylaw expected to be brought forward at the first Council meeting in March.

SAO Hood further advised that once the adjusted assessment roll is finalized, the appeal period has concluded, and the Board of Revision has been held, staff will bring forward the mill rate bylaw. This is anticipated in late April or early May. He noted that due to earlier assessment notice errors, the timing for issuing tax notices may be slightly later than last year, possibly by up to two weeks, but staff expect tax notices can still be issued by mid-May.

He also advised that a capital budget will be brought forward within the next month for Council's consideration. This year, the proposed approach will place greater emphasis on addressing infrastructure repair and maintenance needs rather than focusing primarily on new projects. The intent is to address deficiencies where operating and maintenance budgets have not been sufficient over time.

As part of this work, SAO Hood has asked directors to identify critical components within their facilities and operations and to consider stocking replacement parts for essential equipment. This approach is intended to reduce service disruptions, facility closures, and delays caused by equipment failures.

SAO Hood also advised that, in response to concerns about lead found in drinking water in Yellowknife, the Town will be conducting water sampling in all municipal facilities over the next month. He noted that treated water samples in Fort Smith have never shown the presence of lead, as testing already includes lead and other heavy metals. However, the additional sampling is being undertaken as a precaution. Any anomalies identified will be reported to Council, along with actions to address them.

Finally, SAO Hood noted that a list of ongoing capital projects was included in the report. He advised that while some of these projects have already been mentioned by directors, more detailed updates on each project will be provided at the next meeting to outline their status and progress.

D/M Keizer referenced a project discussed the previous year related to replacing water meters. He recalled that during his own installation, the contractor arrived with an incorrect pipe size and advised that they would return, but that follow up did not occur. He asked whether the water meter replacement project is still included in the current project plans and requested an update on its status, noting that he was unsure whether his own meter replacement had been completed.

SAO Hood advised that the water meter replacement project was not one of the items handed over during the transition from the previous SAO. He noted, however, that there are still locations where older water meters remain in place and are not operational. He stated that he would follow up with the Water Plant to determine whether the project is still ongoing. He also noted that the contractor undertaking the work had encountered some issues and confirmed that he would follow up with them as well.

Cr. Karasiuk suggested that an update on the town hall building needs assessment be included alongside other project updates. He noted that while the report references the Protective Services design retrofit, he would like to see an update on the status of the RFP related to assessing the suitability and viability of the current town hall building. He asked whether that update could be included with the other project updates for clarity and completeness.



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SAO Hood advised that the item would fall under the Protective Services building design and would be tracked within that project. He explained that the design work is dependent on the outcome of the town hall building viability and needs assessment. He noted that if Council decides to retain and expand the existing town hall, the Protective Services building design could proceed as a standalone project. However, if a combined facility is pursued, the design would reflect that approach. For the time being, he indicated that the two items will be kept together until a determination is made on whether they should proceed as separate projects.

D/M Keizer noted that he had heard an informal discussion about the former Federal Building potentially being used as a future town hall. He asked whether this option was being considered as part of the assessment process or whether the comments were simply speculative.

SAO Hood advised that he is not aware of any intention for the Town to take over the former federal building. He confirmed that he has not been involved in any discussions or plans related to that possibility.

8. COUNCIL BUSINESS

- a. Bylaws and Policies
- b. Mayor and Council Round Table
 - i. Cr. Benwell had nothing to note.
 - ii. Cr. Heaton was excused.
 - iii. Cr. Karasiuk noted that he assisted with the territorial volleyball tournament in Yellowknife and wished to recognize the Fort Smith athletes and coaches who participated. He noted that the teams represented Fort Smith well and did the community proud.
 - iv. Cr. Bathe was excused.
 - v. D/M Keizer reminded Council that the NWT Association of Communities AGM is upcoming and will be hosted in Yellowknife. He advised that he will be attending as the Town's representative on the board. He noted that preparations are underway, including a recent meeting to review past matters, and advised that interest in the trade show has been strong, with additional space added due to high demand. He expressed optimism that it will be a successful AGM year.
 - vi. Mayor Fergusson advised that she attended a strategic planning session held on Saturday for the museum, which involved the museum board and focused on their plans for the next five years.

She noted that while she is not a member of the museum or its board, she attended on behalf of the Town to provide input and participate in the discussion. Mayor Fergusson stated that the session resulted in a strong strategic plan and expressed confidence in the museum's staff and board, describing them as a dedicated and passionate group.
 - vii. Cr. Tuckey had nothing to note.



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- viii. Cr. Cox advised that there were several upcoming board and community meetings of note. He mentioned that the Fort Smith Animal Shelter has scheduled its AGM for March 2 and encouraged anyone interested in supporting the shelter to attend, noting that the organization is seeking additional board support. He added that he would not be in town to attend.

Cr. Cox also noted that he attended public meetings hosted by the Fort Smith Airport Authority related to the development of a 20-year airport plan. He clarified that he attended in a personal capacity rather than as a councillor, but shared input focused on supporting general aviation, small aircraft access, and tourism, with the goal of making Fort Smith more accessible and attractive to visitors.

- ix. Cr. Couvrette raised concerns about a recent Public Utilities Board ruling related to the Northwest Territories Power Corporation that approves a rate increase for electricity. He noted uncertainty around the details of the increase, particularly a potential rider applied to the local hydro system, and advised that a consultant is reviewing the decision to clarify its duration, purpose, and cost recovery rationale.

He expressed strong concern that ratepayers should not bear excessive costs resulting from poor project management, especially given Fort Smith's reliance on hydro power. He advised that, through the NWT Association of Communities, a resolution is being considered that would call for the Auditor General of Canada to conduct a comprehensive audit of the Power Corporation.

9. PROCLAMATIONS

10. DATE OF NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

| | |
|---|--|
| Regular Meeting of Council (Community & Municipal) | February 17 th , 2026, @ 7 pm, chaired by Cr. Benwell |
| Regular Meeting of Council (Protective & Corporate) | March 3 rd , 2026, @ 7 pm chaired by Cr. Karasiuk |

11. EXCUSING OF COUNCILLORS

26-022 **Moved by: Mayor Fergusson**
 Seconded by: D/M Keizer

That Cr. Heaton and Cr. Bathe be excused from the Regular Meeting of Council on February 3rd, 2026.

PASSED

12. QUESTION PERIOD

A short discussion took place regarding the proposed new fire centre.

13. ADJOURNMENT

26-023 **Moved by: Cr. Karasiuk**
 Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That the meeting be adjourned at 8:18 pm.



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Minutes adopted this 17th day of February 2026.

Dana Fergusson
Mayor

Certified Correct by Jim Hood
Senior Administrative Officer

