



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

**MINUTES**

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

Present: Mayor Fergusson, D/M Keizer, Cr. Heaton, Cr. Karasiuk, Cr. Tuckey, and  
Cr. Couvrette  
Regrets: Cr. Benwell, Cr. Bathe, and Cr. Cox  
Staff Present: Jim Hood, Senior Administrative Officer  
Raveena Brown, Executive Secretary  
Adam McNab, Director of Protective Services  
Cassandra Gibbons, Director of Corporate Services

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

- a. Cr. Karasiuk confirms quorum and reads the Acknowledgment of First Nations.

**2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

# 26-030

**Moved by: Cr. Couvrette**  
**Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey**

That the agenda be adopted as amended to add a briefing note to 7 Administration under Protective Services, as well as a discussion about the 2026 FCM Annual Conference.

**PASSED**

**3. DELEGATIONS**

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. Regular Meeting of Council February 17th, 2026

# 26-031

**Moved by: D/M Keizer**  
**Seconded by: Cr. Heaton**

That the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 17th, 2026, be adopted as presented.

**PASSED**

*\*Chair transferred to Cr. Heaton @ 7:04 pm*

Cr. Karasiuk noted that, in the section on HAF funding, the minutes state that he had concerns about how the program was being applied. He clarified that this is incorrect. His concern was specifically with the use of the word “waiver,” as it could give the impression that the fees were not being paid. In reality, the fees are still being paid to the Town, with the cost covered through the funding. He noted that the current wording is somewhat misleading and requested that it be corrected.

*\*Chair returned to Cr. Karasiuk @ 7:05 pm*



## 5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

# 26-032

Moved by: Cr. Couvrette  
Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey

That the Mayor write a letter to the Premier and the Ministers of Finance and Infrastructure, requesting a process to engage community leaders on GNWT capital plans affecting Fort Smith and encouraging at least annual engagement.

**PASSED**

## 6. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTEREST

## 7. ADMINISTRATION

### a. Protective Services

#### i. Director's Report

Director McNab provided a high-level overview of the department's activities for February. He reported that emergency response volumes were higher than anticipated. Although the initial report suggested activity was below average, the department ultimately responded to 34 ambulance calls during February, which is well above the five-year rolling average. In addition, the department attended a significant structure fire that required considerable resources and occurred during extremely cold conditions.

Director McNab commended the volunteer firefighters who responded to the incident, noting the challenging and hazardous environment they faced. Despite the crews' efforts, the structure could not be saved. He emphasized the dedication shown by the volunteers, who worked in severe weather while managing equipment and vehicles in difficult conditions, and he expressed appreciation for their commitment and teamwork.

He also recognized several long-serving officers who recently stepped down from their leadership roles in the fire department: Jeff Turner, Brent Starling, and Jason Panter. Director McNab thanked them for their many years of service as officers and noted that they will remain active members of the department. He emphasized that retaining their experience and knowledge within the team is very valuable.

Turning to land and development activities, Director McNab explained that with the introduction of a new role in the department, the Lands and Development Officer will focus primarily on land and development matters. He clarified that the officer's workload includes a variety of responsibilities beyond those reflected in the enforcement charts presented in the report.

At the beginning of the year, a significant portion of the Lands and Development Officer's time is dedicated to business licence renewals, particularly during January and February when many licences are processed. While the report indicates no new business licences issued during the period, Director McNab explained that this does not accurately reflect the workload, as considerable time is spent reviewing and processing licence renewals.

Regarding bylaw enforcement, Director McNab noted that staff have been heavily involved in a legal matter that has required substantial time and attention. During the discovery process associated with this proceeding, the department has identified opportunities to improve documentation and filing practices related to past enforcement activities. While these issues do not relate to current staff actions, they highlight historical gaps that the department is now working to address. Efforts are underway to improve administrative



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processes and ensure that enforcement records are more consistent and complete moving forward.

Cr. Couvrette suggested that future reports include additional information under the business licences section. He recommended listing the number of licences renewed and, where possible, comparing that figure with the previous year's totals. Cr. Couvrette noted that this would provide useful context for those involved in economic development, allowing them to better understand whether the community is maintaining its current level of business activity or experiencing a significant increase.

Cr. Heaton expressed her support for the mental health programs becoming available through the Wounded Warrior Program, noting that she was very pleased to hear about the initiative. She also asked whether there is a timeline for the development or introduction of the new Animal Control Bylaw that was discussed during the Animal Shelter AGM the previous evening.

Director McNab noted that the recent Animal Shelter AGM was not included in his report because it had taken place only the previous evening. However, he expressed appreciation to the members of the Animal Society who attended and used the fire hall for the meeting, acknowledging the time and effort they volunteer to support the service.

He stated that he looks forward to working with the Animal Society as part of the Animal Control Bylaw review process. Director McNab explained that he and SAO Hood are currently preparing several bylaws to bring forward to the Bylaw Review Committee. He added that the SAO is expected to schedule a committee meeting in the coming week, and once the committee meets, he will have a draft version of the Animal Control Bylaw ready for their review.

- ii. Briefing Note: Procurement of a Type 2 Wildland Urban Interface Structure Protection Trailer

**# 26-033**

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

That Council approve the procurement of one (1) Type 2 Structural Protection Unit Trailer from C&V Trailers for \$225,000.00, utilizing GNWT ECC Community Wildfire Resiliency funding.

**PASSED**

Director McNab explained that the briefing note was presented to Council to seek support for using funding that has already been secured. The Town currently has a contribution agreement in place with the Government of the Northwest Territories for \$275,000 to support FireSmart and community wildfire resiliency initiatives.

He noted that the original application for the funding included the purchase of a structure protection trailer as well as funding, either partially or fully, for a FireSmart position for the Town to support additional FireSmart work and proactive public communication. However, the contribution agreement took longer than expected to receive federal approval, and with the March 31 deadline approaching, it is no longer feasible to recruit and hire staff for such a short period.

Director McNab advised that the GNWT and their funding partner have confirmed that the full amount of the contribution agreement can instead be used this year to purchase equipment that supports community wildfire preparedness. As a result, the Town has proceeded with a direct tender process and identified a strong candidate for the equipment purchase.



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He explained that this equipment would significantly improve the community's wildfire preparedness and resilience. Reflecting on the 2023 wildfire season, Director McNab noted that the capacity of the GNWT was quickly stretched, equipment across the territory became scarce, and it became clear that the Town is not currently equipped to deploy large-scale structure protection resources within the community.

Having equipment that can be quickly deployed locally would therefore be highly valuable. He also noted that in years when the community is not directly threatened by wildfire, the Town could deploy this resource to assist other communities. This would provide an opportunity to support regional response efforts while also giving local responders valuable real-world experience operating the equipment.

b. Corporate Services

i. Director's Report

Director Gibbons provided an overview of several key updates within Corporate Services.

She reported that organizational training has now been scheduled and will take place in mid to late April. The training will be delivered using a staggered approach to ensure that departments and staff within those departments can attend with their respective teams while maintaining service delivery and avoiding disruptions to operations.

Director Gibbons also noted that after three months in the role, both she and the Corporate Services team have begun to establish a strong working rhythm. The department has implemented a standing staff meeting to support collaboration and coordination. Through these meetings, the team has begun setting plans, establishing milestones, and identifying internal project priorities. She commented that the department is beginning to take shape positively and productively.

She further reported that she and Director McNab recently met to review the current billing workflows associated with Protective Services, including how information flows through the processes used for invoicing. Their discussion also considered how upcoming changes related to the Cost Recovery Bylaw may impact these workflows. Director Gibbons explained that this review has provided an opportunity to examine the processes more closely, identify areas for improvement, and address any inefficiencies moving forward.

In addition, the department has been working with the Bank of Montreal to explore opportunities to improve operational efficiency. One proposed change involves moving the Town's daily deposit process to the bank's night deposit slot rather than having reception staff attend the branch during business hours. This change would reduce the time staff spend waiting at the busy branch. Director Gibbons noted that the bank has provided approval for this adjustment, and the change is expected to be implemented in the coming weeks.

Finally, Director Gibbons shared that she had a productive conversation with the Bank of Montreal's regional vice president regarding the Town's ongoing relationship with the bank, particularly with the local branch. The discussion focused on strengthening that relationship while also supporting the Town's goal of improving administrative efficiencies.

Cr. Heaton asked if Council was going to receive a variance update. SAO Hood advised that the fourth quarter variance will be presented to Council. In addition to the work highlighted by the directors, she noted that the Town's annual audit will begin on March 16, when the auditors will be on site. Once the auditors complete their work by the end of April and provide any required adjustments, administration will present the audited financial statements along with the fourth quarter variance.



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ii. Account's Paid List

Cr. Tuckey inquired about whether the Ambulance is back in the Bay or if it is still being stored elsewhere. Director McNab explained that the rental space is used for the second ambulance, which is currently stored in Terry Pobblestone's building. He noted that this arrangement has been in place because the fire hall does not have sufficient space to accommodate both ambulances.

He added that the primary ambulance is normally kept in the ambulance bay at the Health Centre. However, it is currently being housed at the fire hall. Director McNab explained that this decision was made because the department now responds to a higher volume of ambulance calls than fire calls, and having the ambulance at the fire hall allows for quicker response times.

c. FCM's 2026 Annual Conference and Trade Show – Edmonton, June 4-7

**# 26-034** **Moved by: Cr. Heaton**  
**Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey**

That Council approve the attendance of D/M Keizer at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2026 Annual Conference and Trade Show, taking place June 4 to 7, 2026, in Edmonton, Alberta;

And further, that the Town cover eligible travel, accommodation, and related expenses, noting that the conference registration fee has been waived through the FCM New Voices Initiative.

**PASSED**

D/M Keizer informed Council that new councillors had received a message from the Mayor encouraging them to apply for the New Voices Initiative, a program intended for first-term councillors. He explained that the initiative covers an attendance fee of approximately \$1,400 for participants. D/M Keizer was recently informed that he was chosen for this initiative.

He noted that the program brings together councillors from across the country and includes sessions on a wide range of municipal topics, such as infrastructure, artificial intelligence, disinformation, reconciliation, tourism, municipal finance, and public safety. Many of the presentations and discussion groups also focus on northern, Indigenous, and rural perspectives.

D/M Keizer added that the Mayor had previously attended the program and spoke highly of the experience, describing it as one of the most valuable forums she had participated in for expanding awareness of municipal leadership and responsibilities. He indicated that, with Council's support, he would like to accept the opportunity and attend the program.

**8. COUNCIL BUSINESS**

a. Bylaws and Policies

i. First Reading of the 2026 Annual Borrowing Bylaw No. 1075

**# 26-035** **Moved by: Cr. Tuckey**  
**Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette**

That the 2026 Annual Borrowing Bylaw No. 1075 be given first reading by title only.

**PASSED**



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SAO Hood provided a brief summary of the briefing note and explained the purpose of the proposed motion. He noted that the annual borrowing bylaw is intended to ensure the municipality can respond quickly in the event of an emergency or for other financial needs, without returning to Council for approval at that time.

He explained that the municipality has not used an annual borrowing bylaw in the past, but establishing one is a proactive measure. The proposed borrowing limit is \$720,000, which represents approximately 2 percent of the municipality's projected annual revenue.

SAO Hood added that the bylaw is intended to help manage potential cash flow pressures earlier in the year, before property taxes are levied in May. While the borrowing authority has never been used, having the bylaw in place ensures the municipality has the flexibility to address any temporary cash flow issues if they arise.

Cr. Heaton asked whether the borrowing would be obtained through BMO or from the federal government.

SAO Hood responded that the borrowing would be through the Bank of Montreal, which is the municipality's financial institution. He noted that the Town already maintains a line of credit with the bank and also holds its corporate credit card accounts with them.

ii. Second Reading of the 2026 Annual Borrowing Bylaw No. 1075

**# 26-036**

**Moved by: Cr. Couvrette**

**Seconded by: D/M Keizer**

That the 2026 Annual Borrowing Bylaw No. 1075 be given second reading by title only.

**PASSED**

b. Mayor and Council Round Table

i. Cr. Bathe - excused

ii. D/M Keizer reported on his attendance at the NWT Association of Communities AGM, noting it was a useful opportunity to meet with representatives from other communities and exchange information.

He highlighted a minister's forum where attendees asked questions directly to territorial ministers. He also noted that he and Cr. Couvrette attended sessions hosted by NTPC on integrated power planning, which involve significant initiatives that Council should be aware of.

D/M Keizer added that he would share the materials and information from the meetings with staff and thanked Council for the opportunity to attend.

iii. Mayor Fergusson - excused

iv. Cr. Tuckey noted that the snowboarding event was successful.

v. Cr. Cox - excused

vi. Cr. Couvrette reported that the NTPC Intervention Committee had ongoing discussions with the Power Corporation regarding recent increases in power rates and concerns raised by residents after receiving their power bills.



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He indicated that he would be bringing forward a motion for the Town of Fort Smith to file as an intervener with the Public Utilities Board regarding the capital project related to the surge tank repairs. Cr. Couvrette explained that ratepayers are typically expected to absorb the cost of such capital projects, but noted that the project timeline and costs have significantly increased from the original estimate.

He suggested that the Town should intervene to raise concerns about the project, particularly regarding cost increases and whether proper inspections were conducted during previous major upgrades to the facility.

- vii. Cr. Benwell - excused
- viii. Cr. Heaton reported on several recent community activities and updates. She noted that the animal shelter successfully appointed a new president and additional board members. She also asked the community to be patient with the thrift store as it works through staffing changes and processes donations.

She thanked Sam Stokel for serving as interim Director of Community Services and mentioned a new email-to-print service available at the library. Cr. Heaton also highlighted the successful Indigenous Language Night at JBT School.

She encouraged residents to volunteer for the upcoming Frolics events and concluded by offering condolences to the families of Mary Burke and Vina Champaign.

- ix. Cr. Karasiuk had nothing to add.

c.

**# 26-037**

**Moved by: Cr. Couvrette**  
**Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey**

That the Mayor write a letter to the GNWT (Premier's office) requesting the NWT enter a process to adopt a single time year-round (single time adoption request).

**PASSED**

**# 26-038**

**Moved by: Cr. Couvrette**  
**Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey**

That the Town of Fort Smith file as intervenors in the NTPC Surge Tank Capital Project.

**PASSED**

D/M Keizer asked Cr. Couvrette about the cost associated with acting as an intervener. Cr. Couvrette explained that when submitting an application to intervene through the Public Utilities Board, funding is typically available and the associated costs are reimbursed. He added that the Town could request further clarification on the process if needed.

## 9. PROCLAMATIONS



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**# 26-037**

**Moved by: Cr. Tuckey  
Seconded by: Cr. Couvrette**

That Cr. Benwell, Cr. Bathe, and Cr. Cox be excused from the Regular Meeting of Council on March 3rd, 2026.

**PASSED**

**12. QUESTION PERIOD**

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

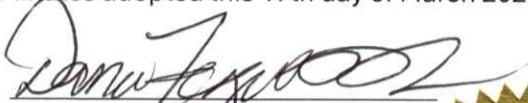
**# 26-038**


**Moved by: Cr. Heaton  
Seconded by: Cr. Tuckey**

That the meeting be adjourned at 7:46 pm.

**PASSED**

Minutes adopted this 17th day of March 2026.

  
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Dana Fergusson  
Mayor

  
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Certified Correct by Jim Hood  
Senior Administrative Officer

